

## **Singing Ourselves In**

A thesis submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in the Department of Curriculum Studies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon

By

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## Dedication

I wish to dedicate this work to my sister, Denise, who passed away while I was mid-study. I have been in shock and disbelief, ever since. At first, I thought this was reason to quit but I knew I could not live with my self as a quitter and I had to persevere. It is more likely your help - the help of your spirit that saw me through. As an Elder once so eloquently stated, "some people must die so that the people will live". For the words of praise you spoke to me as a child always delighting in my creativity, I thank-you because as an adult my creativity serves me well.

You could see woman dancing  
In a circle  
And shared your vision with me  
That I might see it too

We wondered what it meant

And then, one day  
I found myself  
Dancing in a circle  
Of women  
I instantly thought of you

And wished you could be there with me

When you slipped away  
We prayed in a circle of women  
That you would  
Find your way home  
And have peace

I danced in a circle  
With our people  
I danced all night like I had never danced before  
I know that you carried me

And then I understood  
The women dancing  
Would be you and I  
I never knew it meant  
That you would join me from the other side

Misse puhne kum kwen min

I would also like to dedicate this thesis to Candace and Feather my nieces who now embark on life's journey without their mom. My heart goes out to you each time I think of you. Know that you mean everything in the world to me.

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## Abstract

In a qualitative study, grade three students in an urban classroom were introduced to Aboriginal children's picture-storybooks followed by "menoh," which are literary response activities.

"Menoh" is defined as aesthetics, although, in this study "menoh" activities stem from Anishnabe and Cree cultural ways such as in traditional singing, dance, drumming, art and cooking.

The researcher used a reframing as a decolonizing methodology in order to reclaim Aboriginal voice and perspective. Reframing is taking greater control over the way Aboriginal research is structured, analyzed and written. The research data was collected over a period of several months within the classroom where the researcher read aloud and drew Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal listeners into the multi-layers of the stories. Through dialogue and critique, the students discussed the stories in literary circles. They shared meanings about the stories and made connections to their own lives and the lives of others. The stories contained messages about loyalty, respect, responsibility, honesty, humility, trust, and sharing—all those qualities that helped Aboriginal people live the life they did and still do today. Discussion was followed by a variety of "menoh," activities that introduced aesthetic ways of knowing from an Aboriginal perspective.



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## **Chapter One**

### **Preamble**

#### **Singing Ourselves In**

In my years of teaching primary grades, I have worked with predominantly Aboriginal children, with the exception of one class enrolling children of multi-cultural descent. It is my experience that students respond favourably to learning when provided with aesthetic response activities such as singing, drumming and art, rather than answering recitative questions after reading a story. Cajete (1994) states; "Traditionally, Indians view life through a different cultural metaphor than mainstream America" (p. 19). He continues:

"...in realizing that American Indian perceptions of education have traditionally been informed by a different metaphor of teaching and learning can more productive insights into contemporary Indian education be developed (p. 21).

Cajete understands these traditional metaphors of education derive their meaning from unique cultural contexts and interactions with natural environments. He believes the collective experience of Indian people and their cultural adaptations have formed a body of shared metaphors regarding the nature of education and its essential ecology. An example of a shared metaphor that reflects the richness and depth of understanding of ways of knowing and learning would be "Unity through diversity," and "We (Indians) are all related" (Cajete, 1994, p. 35). Greene (2001) claims that the metaphor's meaning lies in the transformation it brings to our thinking provoking change in the perceiver

(p.102). 'Singing Ourselves In' is a metaphor that exemplifies for Aboriginal people that "we have voice." When applied to teaching, singing is one of the ways that "give us voice" (Smith, 1999) and nourishes our beings as Aboriginal students and teachers continually faced with the oppressive hegemonic curriculum. Literally and figuratively, giving us voice allows us to tell our stories and share our cultural teachings to ignite the fire of pride in self-identity and validation as a people. It makes our perspective and culture visible by providing the opportunity to share through story, song, dance, drawing, painting and cooking.

There are many ways to approach the teaching-learning situation. My teaching approach is to begin within the artistic realm. I believe that this has always been my teaching strength. Aboriginal traditional culture is based on a sensual reality – a heightened sense of being shared through cultural traditions of song, dance and ritual. Traditionally, our learning is through observation and then, imitation or modelling. Cajete would call it, "the traditional Indian way of learning by doing" (1994, p. 12).

I respect the traditional ways of teaching and have always tried to meld traditional teaching ways in the classroom setting. Song, dance, and art are merely part of Aboriginal epistemology, but are an essential ingredient towards introducing and teaching aspects of Aboriginal cultures to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

According to Battiste (1995), there is a crisis in Aboriginal Education in Canada. Young Aboriginal students are not succeeding in the school systems. Aboriginal students' success in schools is contingent upon their success in acquiring strong reading and writing skills. At a time when the Elders and politicians state that education is the key to the future and our children are our future, our children are not always acquiring the skills needed to pursue their dreams. When I taught at an Aboriginal high school, I

was not surprised by the fact that the Aboriginal students were not engaged in reading. However, when I found grade one and grade two students “turned off” from reading, I became concerned. I began to ask myself, “How can we excite children to be life long readers?” Providing the essential motivation and maintaining student motivation became the challenge for teaching these early readers.

These questions from my professional practice led me to examine those situations in my classroom teaching, which had “turned on” the students, and I realized that it was those moments when the students and I experienced the stories through ‘aesthetic’ activities that their spirits came alive. Reflecting upon memorable teaching moments led me to this study.

The overarching research question that framed the study was to describe student response to Aboriginal children’s picture storybooks when presented with aesthetic response activities. In Western traditional teaching the ‘traditional’ responses to literature include comprehension activities, recitative questions and writing. The aesthetic response that I required for my lessons stands apart from the Western tradition as aesthetic response stands apart from the literary form. In essence, reframing the learning environment to encompass Aboriginal perspective and traditional teaching practises.

The purpose of this study was to introduce one group of students to Aboriginal children’s picture storybooks and through ‘aesthetic’ response activity connect student’s own experiences to the stories. In addition, the students would experience activities grounded in Aboriginal culture. The students in the study, from an urban prairie west side grade three classroom, were introduced to Aboriginal picture storybooks, followed

by a brief discussion circle and then immersed in a wide range of 'Aesthetic' response activities.

Descriptions of the integration of Aboriginal culture with aesthetic learning activities are highlighted in Chapter Four and shared in Chapter Five. Hopefully, this aesthetic approach to teaching may set a new direction for literacy learning of Aboriginal, mainstream and immigrant children in our schools which may affirm Aboriginal cultural identity for the Aboriginal students and begin an acculturative (Hulan & Warley, 1999) process for the mainstream students to expand their cultural horizons. Ultimately this approach will awaken them to the differences that difference makes and turn the focus on the enrichment of diversity.

### **One Voice: Strong Singing**

As an Anishnabeque woman I have been teaching predominantly Aboriginal children, for twelve years within urban settings. I am a person of the Three Fire Confederacy – the Ojibwe, the Odawa, and the Pottawattimi. I come from Wikwemikong Indian Reserve, Manitoulin Island, Ontario. My father is Odawa and my mother is Pottawattimi and they both speak the Anishnabe language of the Three Fires people. According to the Sacred Migration Stories of our Oral Tradition that are told and retold in the Midewewin Lodge, the Three Fires people are all Anishnabe originating in the eastern part of Canada along the Atlantic coast. The Midewewin prophecies foretold the migrations of our people; through these migrations we became separated into three groups. The names Ojibwe, Odawa, and Pottawattimi are distinctions according to our relationship to the sacred fire of the Midewewin or the group's role within the community. The O-daw-wahg or trader people had the responsibility to provide food and supplies to the entire Nation. The Ojibway were the faithkeepers of the people,



keepers of the waterdrum and the sacred scrolls of the Midewewin. The Ojibway were later mistakenly referred to as the Chippewa. The group called the ish-ko-day'-wa-tomi were the Keepers of the Sacred Fire. Later, they were referred to as the O-day'-wa-tomi and eventually Pottawattimi (cited in Pomedli, 2000 p. 7 and Benton-Benai, 1988, p. 98). This is how this story has been told to me.

The Saulteaux people of the west are also Anishnabe people. They were termed 'Saulters' by the French fur traders, who gave this label to the Aboriginal people frequenting the waterways and trading posts of the Sault St. Marie area. The term assigned to the 'Saulters' later became pluralized to Saulteaux. They also speak the Anishnabe language. I explain this history briefly, because Anishnabe authors have written some of the Aboriginal children's literature chosen for my research, and some of the students in my study were Saulteaux- Anishnabe people. I have met Saulteaux- Anishnabe people in the schools that I have taught in and among the student body. One family became close friends, and eventually my daughter and I were adopted into their family and home community of Yellow Quill. They have been my strength, given me guidance and in the oral tradition, they have informed my understanding of the history, the language, the cultural teachings and the Sacred Way of our people.

The Elders that I have come to know from Yellow Quill community have become my teachers, particularly with regard to the teachings of the drum and songs. When I was new to teaching, I would spend the summers on my home reserve – Wiky. I found the Elders here very supportive. I would receive gifts of sweetgrass and cedar. I would be given teachings and stories. The gift that was the most significant for me was a drum that was made for me and presented to me at a ceremonial give-away. I was told

that the drum was a gift for the fact that I was a teacher and that my students were Indian children. I was both honoured and humbled at the same time.

Upon receiving a drum, I was elated to receive such a beautiful gift and yet saddened because I had no songs, nor did my grandmothers have songs. I did not have any teachings about the drum and I was not even sure if I would be able to use it. Thus began my humble journey with the drum. In time I met many teachers, learned many songs, was given the protocols for the drum from both Anishnabe and Cree peoples and have been invited to sing in ceremony. I am fortunate to dream songs and bring them forward to the daylight. The drum became my strength as a teacher and I came to realize I am a strong singer and more importantly that it gives me voice where I never would have dreamed having one.

I believe that teaching through the experience of story, song, dance, cooking and art creates a deep and enriching cultural learning experience. Through these processes and practises students use all of their senses to learn, thus ensuring an internalizing of meaning-making that the students will carry with them for life. These experiences would be considered 'aesthetic' learning experiences as literacy-response activities in euro-centric pedagogy. In immersing my students in an aesthetic learning situation the print medium is set aside for a created 'lived experience' which relates to the literature. The intention of these activities was to recreate the 'lived experience' or the sensory reality of oral tradition. According to Stairs (1995) who reflects upon the way that Aboriginal students learn within the traditional education, "The linguistic and curricular content of Native Education can only be successful when embedded in traditional cultural values, ways of using language, of interacting, and ways of knowing (cited in Battiste, p.150). Grounding learning within traditional values is what I hoped to achieve in this thesis.

In our circle of learning formed by the grade three classroom, I implemented a cooperative learning situation. The students were encouraged to care for their fellow students so that they learn that well being of the group is more important than personal self-sufficiency. In the traditional community survival would be dependent on relationships that value interdependence; therefore cohesion among students is imperative. Stairs (1995) claims Native teachers bring with them their funds of knowledge and their culturally patterned ways of organizing and passing on that knowledge as well as the value systems of their communities in terms of what is important to learn and how to learn it. Ensuring student success occurs through cultural inclusion and through the implementation of a cultural foundation. The conceptualization and implementation of Native education stem from a cultural foundation or worldview. There is a need to focus on progressive incorporation of Native ways of learning into mainstream formal education, using Aboriginal worldview as the foundation.

In my experience teaching in a prairie urban school, the system has served to perpetuate inequalities in power distribution. The educational theories of the mainstream have dominated the curriculum and the ideological constructs are all formed from the dominant culture. Apple (1979) would consider this “cultural reproduction” wherein the primary function of schools is to reproduce in each group the social patterns and power relations of the prior one. Hegemony assures the mainstream is bound for success in schooling but fails to consider the possibilities for anyone who is outside the mainstream such as Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people are subjugated in schools that work to sustain inequitable, unjust, and ruthless distribution of power. Schools serve as the site of oppression for those students who stand outside the privilege of mainstream. For far

too long Aboriginal students accepted their plight in life as the norm. When schools teach only a select version of knowledge, knowledge becomes a form of cultural capital (Apple, 1979).

Highwater (1975) reinforces that there is no replacing the dominant's ability to perpetuate 'otherness' regardless of all the educational refinement in the world. Co-existing with hegemony is the mainstream education crisis. Highwater's critique of the education system thirty years ago still applies today.

"There can be nothing more horrifying for the victors of the Western world than to discover that they have won everything and in the process lost themselves. By methodically divesting their children of the capacity for vision they have forfeited the ability to see anybody but themselves" (Highwater, J. 1975, pp. 12-13).

Granted some changes in education have come as teachers become more aware and respectful of cultural diversity, but in view of the cultural capital, power and privilege of the dominant culture, positive changes in education appear to stay the same. For too long, Aboriginal perspective in terms of history, language and culture have been absent from the curriculum. What are needed are more ethical and politically conscious modes of educating as well as a change in the curriculum to be more equitable and more representative of the students it serves. Because the dominant are in a position of power they have the self-serving opportunity to define the social order, exercise hegemony, and protect dominant interests.

'Singing Ourselves In', serves as a decolonising methodology (Smith, 1999) that can no longer preserve existing power relations. It is meant to expose non-Aboriginal people to other worlds that exist beyond the perpetual dominant focus to alternate realities. 'Singing Ourselves In' becomes the tool to bring us into existence, to expose the deceptive means behind the hidden curriculum that is embedded in

hegemony and allow for cultural diversity. 'Singing Ourselves In' assigns us to the challenge of what has been accepted as the 'universal truth' and to expose the dominators to another's truth. 'Singing Ourselves In' provides for us as Aboriginal peoples the opportunity to tell our story, our truth in history, our perception, progression, and cultural rejuvenation through our voice of experience and knowing. If we came to realization that true humanity is more understood by cultural difference rather than cultural similarity, deep understanding of those differences can be made.

It is possible that there is not one truth, but many; not one real experience, but many realities; not one history, but many different (Highwater, 1981, p.6) and valid ways of looking at other worldviews. McMaster and Martin (1998) argue that rather than perpetuating an academic colonialism, Aboriginal communities need to articulate their own scholarship that validates Indigenous systems and philosophies (cited in Graveline, p. 69). Furthermore, Armstrong (1998) states that quality education needs to be based on Indigenous educational methods not only to ensure our survival as Indigenous beings but for our very existence as humans (cited in Graveline, 1998). Whether at a national level or an individual level, creative expression is essential for the recovery of our identity (Anderson, 2000, p. 144). Arnatsiaq (2000) remarks, "How can you have self-government without joy, without arts? ... Politicians running around without pride...you have to have arts. You have to reclaim your identity. You have to have song (cited in Anderson, p. 144). Song is what will set the spirit free and allow one to internalize meaning in their world by processing information and new experiences from different but equally valid perspective.

If we could redefine Aboriginal education as 'Education from Within', only then would we be recognizing and respecting Aboriginal traditional ways of teaching and

learning. We draw from the spirit place for inspiration, joy, calming, and healing, so too can we draw from the spirit place to ensure learning. Learning therefore becomes inspired by our own emotional connection to what is being presented. Creativity is considered to be spiritual expression. The Elders have always said artistic expression, in any form, whether it is art, singing, music or drama is part of the spiritual realm of the medicine wheel.

In 'Singing Ourselves In' we transform, to create more enriched lives for our children and ourselves. In the creativity of singing, art, music and dance we connect to the strength of the traditions of our Elders. In Elders' words, "In our hearts is a sacred vision that will guide us". If we can ignite this vision through creative measure, we will live well in society's changing conditions. As Aboriginal educators, we must seek vision to remember the ancient ways of the grandmothers and envision the actualization of traditional ways in our classrooms. In this way, as Aboriginal teachers we are respecting traditional protocol. As an Anishnabekwe teacher, I respect the Ancestral belief that we individually need to contribute to sustaining the cultural traditions of our people to ensure existence in the future of our children. Individually, we can make small changes to education steadily working toward a cohesive whole by redefining Aboriginal education. In addition, as a benefit to the non-Native student in attendance, it opens the doorway for the element of acculturation on their part and maybe for the first time, allowing them to see beyond their limited view of reality.

'Singing Ourselves In' frees us from oppressive institutional constructs, allows for de-hegemonizing curriculum and most importantly allows us to be the people we were meant to be.

*"If just one voice  
Sings out its call  
There would be some hope  
For us all  
Somewhere in the spirit of drum and song."  
(King, A.L. 2003)*

**To Summarize:** In this chapter I presented the metaphor for teaching and learning as 'Singing ourselves in.' Aboriginal perceptions of education are drawn from very unique and distinct metaphors far different from mainstream perception. Insight into teaching and learning can be better developed with this understanding. I have attempted to integrate cultural teachings as aesthetic response realizing the inequalities in the school system with regard to curriculum. Incorporating Smith's research on decolonising methodologies, I chose the metaphor "singing ourselves in" to give us voice in terms of cultural inclusion. The focus of my thesis is to describe student response to Aboriginal children's picture Storybooks when presented with aesthetic activities. This thesis describes the student response to aesthetic activities presented after each Aboriginal picture storybook is introduced. The students participated in aesthetic activities such as art, cooking, dance, and singing which is described in chapter four. In chapter two I review the literature that supports my approach to teaching. The response for students is described in chapter four and analyzed in chapter five.

### **Definition of Terms:**

The following definitions of terms were used in this thesis.

**Aboriginal: Aboriginal, Indian, Native, and First Nations:** These terms will be used interchangeably to refer to the same group of people, namely, the Indigenous groups of Canada.

**Aesthetic Response** involves the reader's personal, emotional, often empathetic (rather than cerebral) response to the imaginative and expressive qualities of language (Tomkins, Bright, Pollard & Winsor, 2002, p. 589).

**Colonialism** is the theoretical practise and process by which European nations exploited indigenous populations for the benefit of the mother country. Imperialism and colonialism are interconnected in which colonialism is one expression of imperialism (Smith, 1999, p.21)

**Decolonization** is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels. For researchers, one of those levels is concerned with having a more critical understanding of the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform research practices (Smith, 1999, p.20). It is about centring our concerns and our worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (p. 39).

**Intertextuality** is defined as the interconnectedness of human language, in the patterns images and meanings. Individuals use their knowledge of one text as a schema for understanding and interpreting new texts (Nodelman, 1996).



**Kendahsin** is the Anishnabe term that refers to the act of teaching (King, in interview. 2004)

**Menoh** is a quality to all things in life that make it 'aesthetically' pleasing to the senses (King, in interview. 2003)

**Mamatowisewin** refers to the creative life force in all things (Ermine cited in Battiste & Barman, 1995, p.110).

**Reader Response** is both a critical and pedagogical approach to literature, Reader-response focuses on the reader's unadulterated, felt responses to text, the web of feelings, sensations, images, ideas (Rosenblatt, 1978) in (Tomkins, Bright, Pollard & Winsor, 2003, p.594).

**Reframing** can be considered a decolonising methodology or devised strategy to revitalize and honour Indigenous culture by resisting being boxed and labelled according to categories that do not fit (Smith, 2000, p. 153)

**Schema** is the cognitive structure's conceptual filing system, mental frameworks by which children and adults store information (Tomkins, Bright, Pollard & Winsor, 2002, p.594)

## **Chapter Two**

### **Redefining Aboriginal Education From An Aboriginal Perspective:**

Defining Aboriginal Education is the most pertinent question facing Aboriginal teachers today. With every new generation, the need to redefine Aboriginal education persists as we experience cultural erosion. Efforts to maintain our languages compete with the school system that is tailor made for the dominant culture. Subject to a system that perpetuates hegemony, Aboriginal students encounter exclusionary practices that often result in low self-esteem.

Many attempts have been made to define Indian education in relationship to place, time and tradition. Aboriginal educators have worked with Elders to create a base of cultural information and history to add into the existing educational materials. Curriculum revision was initiated in the province of Saskatchewan in 1984 with the formulation of IMECAC – the Indian and Metis Educational Advisory Committee to the Minister of Education. In 1985, their report recommended the establishment of an on-going advisory committee as well as the Five Year Action Plan to ensure Native curriculum development and the implementation of Native culture and content.

By 1995, First Nations had started moving from models of hegemony and colonial domination to those that are culturally, linguistically, and philosophically relevant and empowering. Battiste (1995) contends the very tenets of Indian education

had to change from accepting acculturation and cognitive assimilation as final ends to revitalizing and renewing language and cultural identity.

In terms of defining Aboriginal education, Hampton (1995) suggests a medicine-wheel typology as an organizing tool to discuss principles and boundaries in the redefinition and theory of Indian education (cited in Battiste & Barman, 1995, p. xv). He believes if we are to have our own experts in the fields of study such as science, mathematics, and management etc. than we could meet non-Indians on equal terms and therefore provide educational leadership that makes math, science and computers accessible to our students. What is most important for 'Indian education' is the recognition that it is unique, distinctive and representative of the desire of Indian people to be self-defining, to have their own ways of life respected, and to teach their children, in a manner that enhances consciousness of being an Indian (Hampton cited in Battiste & Barman 1995, p.10). Aboriginal people have opportunity to make positive changes in education that suit the needs of their children limited only by the creativity and innovation given a teacher.

It appears there is a great need for weaving more culturally responsive and innovative methods to teach our Aboriginal children to ensure their success within educational institutions. Aboriginal student needs in all areas of the curricula have not been addressed. Cajete (1994) suggests building an 'ecology of Indigenous education' through an exploration of Indigenous knowledge drawn from the environmental, mythic, visionary/artistic, and the affective communal foundations of tribal life. His work explores a culturally- informed alternative for thinking about and enabling the contemporary education of American Indian people. Cajete strongly believes that it is through a translation of foundational Tribal education principles into a contemporary

framework of thought and expression that success in education for Aboriginal children will ensue.

### **We Have No Word for Art**

#### **Defining Aesthetic Education from an Anishnabe Perspective:**

Anishnabe culture has always represented its cultural truth and evolution through artistic expression, as evident in petroglyphs, drum paintings, and quill work design. Many of today's contemporary artists use the paint medium today to incorporate the cultural teachings of the past. Every Indigenous culture has an orientation to learning which manifests itself metaphorically in art forms, its way of community, its language, and its way of understanding itself in relationship to the natural environment that contexts or cradles it (Cajete, 1999). Creative expression has ritual spiritual ties. Ermine (cited in Battiste, 1985) refers to this as the "mamatowisiwin" the creative life force from which all things are possible. Kawagley (1999) would term it the 'ella' or all consciousness.

Norval Morriseau, an Anishnabe artist, would see this as bringing down ideas from the "House of Invention" that can be accessed from the dream world to serve the people. The point is the perceptual focus of Aboriginal culture is unique. To understand Aboriginal worldview (that is not to say Worldview is the same for all Aboriginal Nations) and attempt to incorporate worldview into the curriculum requires a perceptual change in Western terms. Morriseau has revealed his experiences from the dream world as inspiration for his paintings. In addition, he has illustrated the pictograph paintings found on the rocks throughout Anishnabe territory, as well as the birch bark scroll writing records of the Midewewin. In attempting to reveal the distinct perceptual

uniqueness between Anisnabe and Western culture, I noted an example in Robinson's writing with regard to Morriseau's work. Robinson (2001), the co-author of Morriseau's book, believes Morriseau to be 'creating a new vocabulary' for the art world. It is interesting to note Robinson's application of literary terms to the aesthetic realm. His analysis is relative to what he is familiar with when he tries to comprehend what is beyond his schematic mapping. In essence, a literate individual can only define things by the constructs of their own literary culture. What is valued in one culture, for example the Western scholar of the literate world, cannot be assumed to be of equal value in another culture. It would be interesting to seek out Morriseau's impression of education. Curricular change needs to be left to the Aboriginal peoples who will locate it in their culture or Worldview. It is with this understanding, that I approach teaching and therefore my research.

#### The Research Study:

This brings me to my study. From the experience of teaching Aboriginal children for the past twelve years, I have come to realize there is a need for curriculum change. My approach has always been to incorporate as much Aboriginal culture and content as I could. I would use Aboriginal children's picture storybooks in my classroom. My goal has always been to 'turn children on to reading'. For my study, the overarching research focus is to explore student response to Aboriginal children's picture storybooks through aesthetic response activities.

In the classroom, the introduction of Aboriginal children's storybooks to grade three students is the main teaching responsibility for me as researcher. Secondly, is to reframe aesthetic response activities that provide a 'lived' experience for the students in the culture of Aboriginal people.

### Defining Art:

Aboriginal scholars have made the attempt to define art from their own worldview. Highwater, uses the term 'primal' people to represent Aboriginals. He states:

*"Among the languages of American Indians there is no word for art, therefore it needs no name. The metaphoric form of expression called 'art' in the West is the best means of transcending the isolation of vastly dissimilar cultures. (Highwater, 1981, p. 13).*

Highwater contends a spectator may be well informed on the techniques of the arts or various aspects of a foreign culture, but if they do not experience aesthetic relationship to the art, education alone will not allow a person to bridge the gap between diverse peoples. In Highwater's experience art became the essential bridge between his cultural alienation and the great world community.

Morriseau would say art for him is the transmission of his experience in the "House of Invention" that stems from the dream world, painted in brilliant colour for the purpose of healing the people. Morriseau, descendant of a Shaman grandfather, understands the spiritual purpose for his art as he serves as a channel to the spirit world. His name is Biiyabik Nimki Beneshi meaning Copper thunderbird. His inspiration as an artist stems from his understanding and relationship to the spiritual realm. He incorporates the sacred teachings of the Midewewin as well as what he has learned from his grandfather into his paintings.

Odjig, a female Anishnabe artist of world renown, states her art is a record the painful history of her people; it is a medium through which to share her culture and hopefully a place to inspire youth. Odjig perceives herself not as an artist of spiritual questing but rather an artist painting portrayals of the unspoken voice. The perceptual

view of the world through the eyes of the artist is at a deeper level of understanding as they paint metaphorically and philosophically the world around them.

'Menoh' as Aesthetics:

To make comparison to the Western world, Northrop (cited in Highwater, p. 13) refers to the aesthetic component as an attribute that has become curiously lost among primal peoples of the West and East. Albert Einstein surmises the mind of logic has been a faithful servant but the mind of aesthetic intelligence is a gift. He views the Western world as moving further away from the gift and relying solely on the mind of intellect. Highwater comments on the Western world's effort to tap into primal modalities in order to enhance the aesthetic world hoping to improve and create new sound in the aesthetic of music. The very purpose of colonial education was to 'eliminate the Indian out of the Indian' and in effect erase the connection to those primal modalities. As the victors of the Western world struggle to redefine aesthetic education for themselves, they come to realize how far removed they have become from 'the gift' and now turn to Indigenous people to help steer their way back to those initial primal modalities. Western scholarship did not come without a price to its victors.

Defining the world from one culture through hegemonic curriculum creates an understanding exclusively in terms of discursive facts- concluding through reason as opposed to intuition- in turn, prevents access to other worlds. Artists the world over understand art to be a way of seeing, but how we see the world is in terms of ourselves and who we are as a people. Art, the peculiar act of expression, which has only recently become known to us as art, reveals the unique sensibility of primal people of which comprises an innate art impulse inclusive of the entire life force. Northrop champions the visionary, the aesthetic vantage point, which provides knowledge of an illusive

alternative kind that finds its creative source in the primal mind (cited in Highwater, 1981, p. 16).

Cajete (1994) speaks of the visionary and artistic contexts that share a mutually reciprocal relationship. Dream and vision is an integral dimension of artistic creation (p.142). Indian youth need to reconnect with their dreaming and creative selves and the educational system needs to reconnect with them. It is through art making and envisioning in the education process that great strides are possible in addressing the personal, social, and cultural disintegration that has become commonplace in the lives of many Aboriginal peoples today. Denying the spiritual and psychological importance of dreaming from the educational process will only serve to further perpetuate the stunting of an essential elemental process of human learning. Learning and understanding how to apply the creative process of visioning in a meaningful way is key to ensuring Aboriginal student success in today's education system. "Visioning embodies and focuses our creative power to visualize and realize new entities in communion with others and our spirit" (p. 145). Art is a way of seeing and in order to understand this requires that one recognize the inherent ritual and ceremony of art as an ongoing dimension of the Aboriginal education process. Creativity and transformation are interrelated in all aspects of artistic expression.

To define aesthetics from an Anishnabe perspective King (2003) offers the term 'menoh'. It is everything that appeals to you because of this 'menoh' element is a part of everything. It is very easy for music to have this 'menoh' quality to it. This is why people enjoy music; there are so many forces or appealing qualities to music that occupy you and allow you to be selective. Taste would be the same. We would say 'menoh pegwat'. Virtually, every sense is stimulated because something is 'menoh' about it. In



other words, the aesthetic of an object is described by the term 'menoh'. Cajete affirms science as cultural, as well as being an individual process of thought, science has been used in some form by every human cultural group. McCarthy affirms rather than assuming that all learners are highly analytical, objective, verbal, structured and parts oriented, the education system must recognize Aboriginal children as intuitive, subjective, non-verbal, synthesizing, and oriented to wholes and practical in their orientation to learning (cited in Cajete, p. 15)

Expanding on the work of King (1991), Ermine (1995) suggests an Aboriginal epistemology that exemplifies the Aboriginal constructs of traditional education (cited in Battiste & Barman, 1995, p. 100): The entirety of our education imbued in ceremony and ritual practise allows us to understand our place in the cosmology. Aboriginal epistemology and western education are at diametric opposites. It is obvious there is a need for some bridge roads to allow for the convergence of two pathways, allowing the integration of ideological constructs that would otherwise forever run parallel.

Aboriginal scholars have defined Aboriginal education and Aboriginal ways of knowing or coming to know as ways of learning. Traditional education and ways of knowing must be considered in all aspects of Aboriginal education, particularly when considering how Aboriginal children learn reading. In a traditional learning environment children learn through observation and experience. When applied to teaching children how to read, the "menoh" or aesthetic experience comes into play. Rather than approaching the literature in the Western Traditional methods, i.e. journals and comprehension, aesthetic opportunities are provided. The students take what they learn from the text and through the follow up "menoh" activity, whether it be dance, cooking,

art, or song the students are given additional opportunity to internalize what they have learned, applying the aesthetic response to the literature.

Aesthetics is used interchangeably with “*menoh*”. Aesthetic, according to the Houghton and Mifflin Canadian Dictionary, is defined as pertaining to the sense of the beautiful (Houghton & Mifflin, 1982). It stems from the Greek word ‘*aisthetikos*’, meaning perceptive and ‘*aisthanesthai*’, meaning to feel. Therefore, using the Greek word aesthetic, adopted by the English, and reinterpreted by Aboriginal scholars for something that closely represents the essence of our being in sensory expression or experience of it. Art and visioning are connections to the spiritual realm. Defining aesthetics for Aboriginal education will include the understanding of traditional art as stemming from ritual, ceremony and the visionary as an integral part of the whole.

I believe the artistic creative realm that includes dance, music, cooking and art are all aesthetically pleasing activities. I am aware of the research that defends its merit based on sensory learning. The modern discourse that combines literacy learning and aesthetics has points to contribute or points that can be adapted for the purpose of this study.

#### Aesthetics and Literacy Learning:

This research study is reframed to focus on ‘*menoh*’, however, it has parallel antecedents in the aesthetic and reader response theory. I found this literature useful but not as empowering as using my own cultural traditions in teaching students. Aesthetic educators have defined aesthetics and literacy learning. Reading today is considered a transactive process between reader and text in which the reader creates meaning through the lived through experience of reading and writing (Rosenblatt, 1979). Reading is a meaning making process and the reader works to establish meaning in order to

comprehend, or create interpretation (Tomkins, Bright, Pollard & Winsor, 2002, p. 88-89). Aesthetic reading is to read for enjoyment in the aesthetic stance and focus on the lived through experience of reading. Aesthetic reading therefore concentrates on feelings, thoughts, images and associations the reader makes in the process of reading (p. 10). The reader also responds to the text by making associations to other written texts or to experiences of their own lives. According to Rosenblatt (1991, 1978), reading most often requires a balance between aesthetic and efferent reading although literature for the most part would be read from an aesthetic response. For the purpose of my study, the students would be using the aesthetic response, in efforts to build a bridge of understanding between two cultures.

Aesthetic Response activities are activities that require the students to reflect on what the theme of the story given was and then respond through the aesthetic activity. To respond to the text in a meaningful way, it is my intention to deepen the level of understanding of each child toward another's culture. Rosenblatt, Tomkins and others have contributed to defining aesthetic response, in the context of my research they are merely the stepping stones to furthering a definition of what actually took place with students' response activities and whether deeper understanding was evidenced.

Rosenblatt states:

"Aesthetic reading, by its very nature has an aesthetic purpose, the desire to have a pleasurable, interesting experience for its own sake. Paradoxically when the transactions are lived through for their own sake, they will probably have as by-products the educational, informative, social, and moral values for which literature is often praised" (Rosenblatt, 1995, p. 275).

With consideration to a child's linguistic development, there needs to be a greater emphasis on aesthetic listening and reading in the earlier stages of their development. As teachers, therefore, our purpose is to encourage the aesthetic stance. "Transactions with literature that offer some linkage to the child's own experiences and concerns can give rise aesthetically to new experiences."

Rosenblatt (1976) uses a transactional approach and makes application to classroom practise. In her book, "The Reader, The Text, and The Poem", Rosenblatt examines classroom approaches and applications to literary transaction. She reacts critically to the narrow focus of teacher recall and recitation exercises, which motivated her to establish a useful distinction between two opposing modes of experiencing a text namely the "efferent" and the "aesthetic." The efferent mode comes from the Latin word *effere* meaning to carry away. In this case the reader is motivated by the need to acquire information while reading. When a reader is responding in the aesthetic stance, his or her own unique lived experience or engagement with the text is crucial. A Transactional theory proposes that the meaning of a text derives from a transaction between the reader and the marks on the page (Church, 1997, p. 2, 3).

John Dewey (2001) offers a significant treatment of aesthetic theory in "Art as experience" in his chapter Experience and Nature. Dewey stressed the importance of recognizing the significance and integrity of all aspects of the human experience. He states: "The roots of aesthetic experience lie in commonplace experience, in the consummatory experiences that are ubiquitous in the course of human life. Whenever there is a presence into an immediately enjoyed qualitative unity of meanings and values drawn from previous experience and present circumstances, life takes on an aesthetic quality, that Dewey would call having 'an experience'" (Field, 2001, p. 10-11).

Dewey recognizes the senses play a key role in artistic creation and aesthetic appreciation. He believes it is not the sensible qualities present in the physical media the artist uses but the wealth of meaning that attaches to these qualities, that constitute the material that is refined and unified in the process of artistic expression. The unifying element is emotion although insisted it is not the significant content of the work, he believes it is a crucial tool (Field, p. 11). Lastly, Dewey refers to the social implications of the arts, as the product of culture. Dewey believes that it is through art that people of various cultures will express the significance of their lives, hopes and ideals. Art is rooted in the consummatory values experienced in the course of human life in which these values have an affinity that awards to art a critical office in relation to prevailing social conditions (Field, p. 11).

Elliot Eisner, (cited in Kavanaugh, 1998) in reference to the art of educating, focuses his work on artistic intelligences. In his book "Art in Mind", he reveals how the arts affect and transform consciousness. Eisner (1998) profoundly believes more class time should be spent devoted to music, theatre and arts where the focus has been on raising the test scores in the American educational system. Schools need to promote creative processes to learning and allow students the experience of it. Students develop an understanding of the variety of creative responses to experience that "enriches our culture" (p. 2).

Maxine Greene (1995) has inspired many teachers to think in new ways about aesthetic experiences urging them to transform their learning into innovative classroom teaching that recognizes perception, cognition, affect and the imagination as ways of knowing. Greene's philosophy maintains that understanding a work of art exists in the transaction between the viewer and the art object. Greene states: "Aesthetic experiences

require conscious participation in a work, a going out of energy, an ability to notice what is there to be noticed in the play, the poem, the quartet. Knowing 'about' even in the most formal academic manner, is entirely different from constituting a fictive world imaginatively and entering it perceptually, affectively, and cognitively" (Greene, 1995, p. 2). Aesthetic education is defined as an approach to teaching and learning in the domains of several arts: dancing, painting, music, literature, and architecture. Greene derives her conceptions from the work of Dewey, Goodman, and others who are concerned with the transaction encounters between the diversity of human beings and the range of works of art (Greene, p. 2). Greene believes whether the focus is on languages or experience or perceptual elements, eye, mind, and ear all play crucial roles in the process of gaining understanding. When a reflective conversation happens between a perceiver and an art object, a living being has brought a work of art to life against the background of their own experience. Both are enriched, new possibilities have arrived and something new in the world exists (Greene, p. 3). Greene realized the potential for the arts in developing the imagination and maintains, "Imagination is one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities" and plays a crucial role in a child's learning (Binder, 2002, p. 2). Further, she believes that, "the literate mind informed by the arts is not tidy and predictable, cannot be prepped for, cannot be trapped within preordained codes, for the literate mind fuels the sense of knowing, and knowing things" (Greene, 1995, p. 42).

Binder (2002) states: "If someone doesn't know how to write, they can draw and it can mean something to them" (p. 1). She professes to be a holistic educator in the inner city and it is her understanding that art solidifies a contextual understanding of how children learn. She attributes her growth as an educator to Herbert Read (cited in

Binder, 2002)) whose thesis asserts, "Primary education should have its ideal an individual in whom all mental function grows harmoniously together". Therefore, concepts of play, imagination, creativity, and aesthetics are examined considering Read's holistic beliefs (p. 224). Viktor Lowenfeld (cited in Binder, 2002), another of Binder's mentors, supports Read's thesis as he views the visual arts as a vital component in the education of young children realizing the process of drawing, painting or construction is a complex one in which the child brings diverse elements of his environment to make a meaningful whole. Substantiated by Elliot Eisner (1998, 1972) and Egan (1997), was the validity given to the arts as the basis for education.

Binder states:

*"Art is the touchstone for all learning. It is part of the fabric of life, allowing for the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit. Art provides a language of communication within ourselves and with others. For young children, the arts are a way to solve problems, explore new ideas and create authentic realities" (2002, p. 2).*

It is through the experience of teaching in the inner city that Binder realized the power of the arts as a solace for one special needs student in particular who used the visual arts to reveal his inner landscape where meaning-making evolved through his experience of drawing and painting. For Binder, a paradigm shift occurred in how she internalized and developed the interconnectedness between the visual arts and literacy. Binder contends literacy skills are reinforced from their interpretations of visual images. In responding to story through art she concludes children's drawings and paintings furnish the narrative to interpret meaning and development in literacy acquisition (p. 4).

Lea Smith (1996) questions, "How can I create 'living' experiences that will support my students to explore the 'layers' of meaning in a story and what type of learning activity supports students to build personal connections with the story?" (p. 1). Literature as an art form in and of itself, secures the human experience through language. As this experience is secured through other art forms, one's connection with humanity is broadened and deepened. The arts provide for multidimensional involvement with the text in both reaction and creation (p. 1). The arts represent feeling and meaning and allow students to experience their own unique association with story. This provides a process for students to uncover new meaning and derive personal connections. When students can connect to literature through their senses, they move between verbal, non-verbal, logical, and emotional which serve to promote a better understanding of the whole (National Standards for the Arts, 1994). To bring literature studies 'alive', the teacher needs to involve students actively in the learning process realizing the arts are a powerful tool for literacy, experimenting with music, movement, drama, writing or visual arts as a way to connect students with the human experience portrayed in literature. Students are able to 'connect' with text and then consider how the issues of a story may suggest modes of thought or behaviour as they meet the challenges of their world. Arts as 'hands on' experiences help to develop problem solving and critical thinking. In using art as response to literature, to encourage aesthetic reading, the art episodes of visual arts, music, and drama became a type of aesthetic response enabling the students to connect with the story and construct personal meaning (Smith, & Herring, p. 3).

Marshall (2001) contends making art can be a powerful tool for developing critical thinking and literacy. Often, the potential for art practise to stimulate awareness



of social, cultural, racial, and class issues and developing critical judgement about these issues is neglected (p. 1). Marshall uses the term 'art practise' to describe an evolving learning experience that employs observation and critical thinking in the process of creating images. Art practise plays a pivotal role in the emergence and construction of knowledge-what is observed or experienced is transformed into images. Essential to the process is critical thinking and reflection integrated with art making throughout.

Richards and Gipe (2000) expound on the accomplishments of linking literacy lessons with the visual arts. In the training of pre-service teachers, they have observed that engagements with the visual arts have created possibilities for elementary students who come from non-mainstream backgrounds to more effectively construct, extend and share meaning from the texts they read. Several insights were discovered in introducing the arts such as the benefit to disruptive or academically challenged students, pre-service teachers need help in the integration of visual arts to literacy and they need to model literacy based arts for their students. The research reinforces the importance of the arts in elementary education as another way for students to access meaning, learn, think, and communicate (p. 39).

Literature is only one medium by which our children can learn. The Aboriginal culture and languages that are taught outside the institutions have their place in Aboriginal schools but it is not the job of non-Aboriginal people to teach the cultural aspects. The Elders, our Traditional Knowledge Keepers, need to be part of the learning experience. The mistake of the institution is to credentialize everything. This is not how traditional knowledge is passed on. It takes many long years of learning and apprenticeship to reach a traditional understanding. For some this process starts early,

living in the community, speaking the language and having access to Elders who carry traditional knowledge.

When traditional knowledge is brought to the institution there is the danger of it being boxed into the levels and hierarchies characteristic of the colonial methodologies.

Unlike swimming lessons, which range from “Aqua tots to Lifeguard,” Aboriginal traditional knowledge cannot be levelled and credentialed. One might expect Aboriginal curricula titled “Jump Start to Native Culture,” similar to the computer program of the ‘Jump Start’ series. It is up to Aboriginal educators to ‘come to terms’ with what is best for our children and effect change in a positive way for our future generations.

Aboriginal children’s literature can be a wonderful and enjoyable way to introduce Aboriginal culture. From the stories of the past- the oral tradition, recorded on the page, to contemporary stories exemplifying cultural adaptation and evolvement, Aboriginal Literature presents the ‘doorway’ to endless possibility for the teaching and learning of Aboriginal culture. The time for more Aboriginal children’s literature to be developed is long overdue. As Aboriginal peoples, it is time to take pride and share our stories and draw upon “Menoh”, the creative life energy that makes anything possible and ignites the fire from within sparking that unearthly quality of aliveness (King, 2003).

The holistic language experience or constructivist approach has proven to be a successful method in teaching Aboriginal children how to read. It allows for the students to begin with what they know already acknowledging the language and experience they bring to school. Lois Moll (1994) would refer to this as the students’ “Funds of Knowledge.” The child-centred language experience approach is the natural way to teach language: it incorporates oral language practise, language experience activities,

and the use of culturally relevant materials, which are the three most important strategies for improving the reading achievement of Indian students (Gilliland, 1989, p.189).

Many Aboriginal children are holistic learners and they learn more readily if they are able to see the whole picture first and then the details as a part of the whole.

The strengths of learning language holistically is that it provides for the practise of language skills in a meaningful way, actively involving the integration of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Skills are learned and presented in a meaningful context.

The use of culturally relevant material is necessary to facilitate the students learning. Aboriginal children's literature written by or about Aboriginal children in both past and present contexts is an essential component of Aboriginal children's learning.

They learn the values of their own culture as well as developing reading skills. If students are provided the opportunity of a meaning-based approach to reading, they will also have a positive attitude toward reading and their growth and ability in the area of reading will grow as well (Gilliland, 1989, p.24).

As an experienced teacher of Aboriginal children at both the high school and elementary levels, I am well aware of the reading ability of our children and the challenges they are faced with when it comes to their learning. I am cognisant of the systemic racism the Aboriginal students encounter in order to acquire their education. Far too often, they are excluded from the most part from the literature that they read. Stories are about other people or if the story is about them, they are not accurate representations of their culture. Attempts have been made to eliminate stereotypical images of Aboriginal people that appear in the literature. Current literature written by Aboriginal people is authentic and gives a more accurate portrayal of Aboriginal people. Non-Native teachers are not always aware of the inaccuracies being produced and need

to be more cognizant in their literature selection to take the time to find authentic literature.

Byler (2004), in researching and analyzing Aboriginal children's picture storybooks, identified negative stereotypes such as the use of words such as savage, noble inferior to suggest only a few of many such representations (cited in Gangi, p.51). For example, Walt Disney's Pocahontas, an award winning picture story book uses the word "savage" repeatedly. Needless to say, there has been significant negative reaction to it. There are many stereotypical ways in which Aboriginal culture is portrayed, including the idea that Aboriginal culture is inferior to white culture, valueless, and quaint or superficial. The more current literature written by Aboriginal peoples better reflects an accurate cultural representation. Today there is more choice, but Aboriginal people are forever bombarded with undoing the inaccuracies of depiction already created by those who stand outside the culture but understand the consumer markets and the potential profit they will gain by appropriating the culture.

Understanding the role of literacy in the lives of the adult population, as well as the role of the Aboriginal teacher and the potential of their role are all factors that affect the literacy learning of Aboriginal children. In the past twenty years, one of the most positive phenomena is that we have seen the production and distribution of Aboriginal literature within the school systems. Although initially, Aboriginal literature dealt predominantly with legends and stories that were set in the past, the literature of today reflects the more contemporary lives of Aboriginal people.

There are many approaches to teaching reading to children. The more common response to literature is to use Reader response journals where the children record their thoughts and feelings about the text. Reader Response recognizes the work of

Rosenblatt argues that the reader brings with them their experience and interpretation of the text in terms of afferent or efferent response. I believe in utilizing an aesthetic response to literature. Aesthetic response is defined as involving the reader's personal, emotional and sometimes empathetic response to the imaginative and expressive quality of language (Tomkins, Bright, Pollard & Winsor, p.589). It is with the idea that aesthetic response activities to follow text or Aboriginal children's' stories is a way to create a "lived experience" and therefore recreate a sensual reality by which the children utilize all of their senses to learn. In this way, the students experience the culture when the activities chosen reflect some varying aspect of art, dance, singing, music, cooking, or eating. The opportunity to experience the culture also acculturates the mainstream student into an activity or creative learning situation reflective of Aboriginal culture. The goal is to deepen mainstream understanding of the text and culture in general.

Further, it is with the understanding that Aboriginal people relied on an oral understanding of themselves. The histories, teachings, stories were not written down. The oral tradition has carried the knowledge through many generations. The oral tradition is the 'life' force of story. An oral story is considered alive. In Bruchac's (1991) words, the knowledge that Native people obtained from thousands of years of living and seeking balance, was taught in two ways. The first was through experience, the second was through oral tradition, especially through the telling of stories. (Bruchac cited in Susag, 1991, p.10). The Old Ones were the story tellers and the knowledge keepers. In Edward Ahenakew's words, the Old Men were the historians, legal advisors, inspirational leaders and moral teachers (Ahenakew cited in Buck, 1973). King (2003) states the oral tradition is still with us today. King challenged the academic institution to recognize oral history is as valid as the printed word. He further emphasizes the

meaning or need for the oral tradition to pass on history, but to entertain in story as well as teach moral concepts. The oral stories may at first appear simplistic to the outsider but the stories were meant to be repeated over and over with new experience from the reader a new interpretation is formulated.

Oral story, according to Keeshig-Tobias (2004), an Ojibwa writer and reteller the role of oral storytelling was never told for mere entertainment but to speak of a Nations proud achievements and way of life.

“Stories contain information of tribal values, patterns of the environment and growing seasons, ceremonial or religious details, social roles, geographical formations, factual and symbolic data, animal and human traits (p.153).

Story is an important aspect of developing knowledge and self-understanding.

The move from an oral culture to a literate one has not been without difficulty. Story in mainstream culture is written down. Our stories now written are considered ‘impaled’ on the page. The life force that oral story is composed of is no longer considered there. The story written down does not have the life it would if it were told orally. On the positive side, with the oral stories now being written down, the opportunities are great for Aboriginal students and non-Aboriginal students to understand First Nations cultures. The oral tradition stems from a sensory reality and therefore in order to study the text fully it is imperative to be immersed in the sensory realm for optimum learning. The aesthetic response activities were created for this study to provide this opportunity.

Aboriginal educators have long struggled to create an Aboriginal education component for their children in the educational system. Slowly, over the last twenty years, certain changes have come about but not without criticism. The reading series including the character ‘Indian Joe’ replaced White middle class stereotypes with North

American Aboriginal stereotypes. In schools today, we have Aboriginal curriculum resources but given closer scrutiny the design and content is from a European perspective. For example, a classic European melody from “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” is used to represent an Aboriginal lullaby wherein the words of the original melody are substituted with ‘English’ words expressing a more stereotypical depiction of lullaby because the thought stems from perceived European interpretation of what the setting for the lullaby would entail and then what the words might be. It is almost comical when teaching experts of the reading field attempt to remedy the lack of material available in Aboriginal culture; given their understanding of cognitive development and schema theory you would think they would know better than to attempt something that is clearly beyond their schematic mapping. These initial changes are more reflective of colonial methods or colonial design (Smith, 1999). There are many traditional Aboriginal lullabies to choose from that are published. For the teachers, researching them is required. The fact remains; change needs to be initiated from Aboriginal peoples with regard to the literature, particularly children’s books as well as curricular material and implementation. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Aboriginal educators are finding ways to reform education for their children in order that they are successful with mainstream education but not at the cost of their culture and language. It is my interest to research in the field of literacy, particularly children’s literature written by Aboriginal authors, to facilitate literacy learning for both Aboriginal children and the mainstream.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Research and Methodology**

##### **The Participants and How They Were Selected:**

The grade three students, who were participants in this study, were from a local West side community school. The classroom was composed of children representing mainstream, minority and Aboriginal groups. Although the response to literature of all the students is important, I am particularly interested in the response of the Aboriginal students. I have therefore described the response of both Aboriginal students and mainstream students who shared together their connections to the text.

The students and teacher were familiar as I had previously been introduced to them and worked with them in the classroom as a volunteer over a three-month period prior to my research. The teacher, Ann, was an Aboriginal colleague who has a very gentle and caring way in teaching children. I feel this was to my benefit being an Anishnabe teacher that we would have an affinity toward each other. From our working together, I had become aware that we saw things in a similar way and our approach with students was parallel as well as our teaching philosophy for we attempted to fill the empty spaces in the children's lives. My role as an Aboriginal teacher did not come as a



surprise to the mainstream or minority students as their regular classroom teacher was Aboriginal as well. Being an Aboriginal teacher worked to an advantage with Aboriginal children as they recognize that we are the same people as I stand before them as a model.

### **The Study:**

Smith presents a decolonising methodology that brings forward the voice of the Indigenous scholarship as primary to create new theory or serve to enlighten Western theory. With regard to Aboriginal people, our history in the school systems has been one of subjugation and cultural genocide. The challenge in education today is to begin the process of reframing and revitalizing Aboriginal language, culture and worldview. Smith (1999, p. 143) suggests several applicable Indigenous methodologies such as reframing and creating that are applicable to the research. Reframing is defined by Smith as occurring when Indigenous peoples resist being boxed and labelled in categories that do not fit (p. 151). Further, reframing occurs with the way Indigenous peoples write or engage with theories and accounts of what it means to be Indigenous (p.154). Creating is with reference to the spirit of creating which Indigenous communities have exercised for thousands of years. The ability to imagine, to create allows people to rise above their own circumstances, and to dream new dreams (p. 158). Indigenous methodologies are the existing methodological approaches combined with Indigenous practises. This combination reflects the Indigenous researchers and common sense understandings of research which direct how Indigenous communities and researchers define their activities (p. 153). These methods were incorporated into my study as "Singing Ourselves In" to give us voice as Aboriginal people and share my culture and provide opportunity for experience in it. Rather than the voice of mainstream

literature that speaks to a universal truth Smith's (1999) work on decolonising methodologies serves, as the foundation for my approach to my study allowing my own cultural voice as teacher-researcher and the student-participants to be in the forefront.

The focus of my study was to choose Aboriginal children's picture storybooks that present the stories from both traditional and contemporary times. Once the literature was introduced, I presented a "menoh" activity as a response to the literature. By providing the "menoh" activity, the students experienced certain aspects of the culture.

According to King (2003), "menoh" is defined as the aesthetic of an object wherein every sense in the human body is stimulated due to the "menoh" quality of it. Green (2002) believes education is a process that enables people to become different and to enter multiple provinces of meaning such as the arts, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. The learner must break from the status quo or "natural attitude" and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing and feeling, in a conscious effort to impose different orders upon experience (p.5). Further, she states the arts helps us imagine things as they might be and that imagination is what makes empathy possible (cited in Gangi, 2004, p.16). Binder makes the connection between visual art and literacy skills believing literacy skills are reinforced from their interpretations of visual images. Responding to story through art, she concludes children's drawings and paintings furnish the narrative to interpret meaning and development in literacy acquisition (Binder, p. 4). The arts are instrumental in our acquiring insight and understanding into ethnicities and cultures outside our own, embracing diversity and allowing us to co-construct unity. Although, arts and aesthetic learning are not synonymous with "menoh", it is the term that best describes the idea of aesthetic response and in my case, cultural response to Aboriginal children's picture storybooks.

My experience teaching Aboriginal children has brought back to me the teachings my grandmothers shared with me. When I sat by my grandmother's side, sewing birch bark and dying quills to place on the boxes and little canoes, I learned many teachings from her during these long sessions together. She taught me things like the protocol for picking "weengush" (sweet grass) and taking something of the earth. She taught me certain medicines and where to pick them. She taught me the order of things, and the life cycles of the animals, and small creatures that alternated in abundance from year to year. There were many cultural teachings that she passed on to me, but probably the most important was the way she taught, which was understanding that people learn by observing and then by doing. She allowed this opportunity and seemed to know I had observed long enough and was ready to do it. If my birch bark cracked, she would offer a suggestion about technique. If the bark split when inserting the quills, she would offer technique relative to pressure exerted. I worked through my first few pieces, in trial and error, until I produced an exact replica of her work and the two of us would marvel, elated in pride. In my experience teaching, I knew what worked already having sat by my grandmother "learning by observation and doing." Every time I introduced an art lesson, I would sit in a circle with my students and show them what I wanted. There would not be a lot of verbal instruction but modeling was central to the lesson. The sample art piece was made before them and I could count on beautiful creations made from them each time.

Rosenblatt (1978) contends the reader becomes a co-constructor of meaning with the author using as intertextual (Nodleman, 1996) knowledge of language, stories, other texts, and a world in general to understand the words on a printed page. The teacher needs to consider the social and cultural nature of picture book reading as it facilitates

cognitive understandings, which may change over time keeping in mind the nature of the picture storybook, as it is a presentation of both verbal and visual art. For the purpose of this study, Rosenblatt's Reader response theory was adapted to the student response to Aboriginal children's literature. The study is unique in that it is working within the Aboriginal culture and the students are provided "menoh" activities that are from the culture. The interpretations are from Anishnabe kwe cultural concepts of teaching and learning in the "menoh" experience.

### **Data Collection:**

The students were provided the opportunity to respond in a creative way through an aesthetic learning activity related to the text. The Aboriginal picture storybook selections chosen allowed for a creative response in art, music, dance or cooking. A dialogue always followed the response activity. The dialoguing was a process of co-producing meaning. In dialogue, students listen to one another's ideas in a give and take nature, expand the ideas or add to them within the dialogical conversation. There are spaces for ideas to come to life and be developed collaboratively in a dynamic way, but the possibility exists that an original way of weaving, a fresh new perspective will evolve. In tape recording the sessions and discussions around the text, this data collected has been analyzed to shed light on what is happening in terms of the grade three children's response to Aboriginal children's literature.

My research study was qualitative. In the field, I have collected data by audio taping the 'Sharing Circles' with the students as well as taking 'jot notes'. My field notes have been logged into computer files as well as the transcripts of the tapes. Throughout the study, I was participant-observer, observer and a participant. The research included shared discussion circles where the students had the opportunity to

share their work as well as reflect on open-ended questions connected to the story and beyond to their own lives. I have kept notes in a reflective journal of my observations for each session spent with the students. The discussion sessions were tape-recorded and transcriptions made for further analysis (Bogden, & Biklen, 1998).

First, the students were read to an example of Aboriginal story then followed the response activity such as art painting or drawing, song, cooking, drumming or dance. Almost all the sessions included a Sharing Circle. There was a total of six separate sessions. The students' work, be it drawing or painting, was collected if they were willing to share.

The primary method of data collection was the tape-recorded Sharing Circle Sessions in order to interpret the reader response to Aboriginal children's literature. Transcriptions have been colour coded for emerging themes or patterns. A record of selected transcribed material has been included in the analysis. The 'jot notes', expanded field notes, and reflective journal as well as student artwork have been analyzed to discover the patterns that exist in the data.

In analyzing and interpreting the data, I used a descriptive narrative. Utilizing Smith's (2001) decolonizing methodology for Indigenous peoples I wanted to emphasize the revitalizing of culture and suggest a redefinition of Aboriginal education. Smith's decolonizing methodologies of reframing and creating served as the best application to my research. Reframing and creating allowed for my shared community perspective on Aboriginal knowledge and the redefinition of aesthetics from an Anishnabe perspective. Reframing became the most practical strategy as Smith explains it is a way to take greater control of Indigenous perspectives while resisting being boxed and labeled according to categories which do not fit (p. 153). Creating was

another strategy that permeated my writing. According to Smith, the spirit of creating is our powerful imagination that enables us to rise above our circumstances "to dream new visions and hold on to the old ones" (p.158). "Menoh" is the term that describes the response activities such as drum and dance. I tried to interpret how it affected students to experience certain aspects of the culture through "menoh" activities. The research captured a snapshot in time, reflectively, through constant comparison many instances of Aboriginal knowing emerged in my analysis.

The analysis of the data collected required reflective and retrospective thinking as key to the on-going analysis. In reviewing and re-reviewing the data, recording momentous moments spent with students become the new knowledge or lessons learned from the study. Reflecting on the data allows opportunity to reclaim and rename the experience, no longer allowing for the silencing of voices from the margins.

#### **Data and Interpretation:**

The data is reported in a narrative voice. This allowed for the descriptions and reflections to be presented in a fluid and comfortable manner and to allow for the representation of the voice of others. The descriptions included: transcripts of Sharing Circles, descriptions of the sessions, portrait of the class and description of the setting. The reflections included analysis, insights, and perspectives into the Sharing Circles (Forrest, 1998) and how children participated. The descriptions will be presented in Chapter Four while the interpretation of the data is presented in Chapter Five.

#### **Ethics:**

The students involved in the study were given a letter to take home that explains briefly the nature of my research, the purpose of the study and how the student's identity will be protected through the use of pseudonyms. The University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board was required to give consent as well as the Public School Board, the principal and teacher. Samples of these permission letters can be found in the appendices.

### **Researcher's Role:**

The researcher's role was to provide Aboriginal children's stories and read them to the students. In addition to this I provided an appropriate response activity for the children to participate in that is more than the conventional question and answer response or writing a paragraph in a reader response journal that the students are more commonly accustomed to. I read six Aboriginal children's books over a six-week period that I pre-selected on the basis of my preference for Anishnabe children's literature, and Aboriginal children's literature that lends itself to a creative response activity. The literature selected allowed the students to become participants in the response activities designed to incorporate art, song, dance, drumming or discussion circle by providing children alternate ways to respond aesthetically through multiple symbols such as hoop configurations, painting or baking.

### **Selection of Literature:**

I was interested in children's literacy, social and emotional development with regard to respect for Aboriginal culture. During the study, I observed the students' response to Aboriginal children's picture storybooks that presented an Aboriginal perspective. At present there is a growing body of Aboriginal children's literature that has been written expressly for young children to awaken the social consciousness of

North American society. By choosing Aboriginal children's picture storybooks, I attempted to fill the gap in what is usually shared as literature in provincial classrooms that serves to further alienate students from their own culture and identity, as they move through the system.

The values of the mainstream are what have become imprinted on their minds, which is oppositional to the value system of their own Aboriginal culture. At the expense of their culture, many Aboriginal people are abandoning their own and buying in to the mainstream. The unspoken message embedded in curricular hegemony is that only the mainstream culture is the cultural capital necessary to succeed in life (Apple, 1979, pp. 3-7). The mainstream history excludes all 'others' history and is understood by the mainstream to be assimilated according to plan. In this way it then becomes very difficult for Aboriginal students to establish a positive identity for themselves when they are excluded from not only the curriculum but also the text books and literature of the classrooms.

When the mainstream controls the education system, then education is prescribed for all that stand outside the mainstream. Who they are and who they should become is decided for them. The mainstream in turn never really develops an understanding outside their culture of any kind of alternate reality beyond a surface level understanding. Mainstream students therefore become a focus of the study to listen to their response to Aboriginal children's literature.

"Children's books are not merely frivolous entertainment but a part of society's general culture. U.S. culture is white dominated and racist. Children's books in the U.S. reflect our society, while at the same time reinforcing and perpetuating racism" (Moore, R.B. & Hirschfelder, A.B. in Slapin, & Seale, 1987p.??).



Although many books since this time have been written and used in classrooms throughout Canada and the U.S.A that pertain to a variety of cultural groups such as Hispanics, Asian, African and Aboriginal, they are still just a small fraction of the total production when compared to mainstream mass production. Culturally diverse literature stands at approximately ten percent of production and the number of teachers willing to 'buy in' literally and figuratively is still a small percent of the total teaching population.

People of minority cultures are still largely underrepresented in children's literature. For example, in the year 2000, of the approximately 5,500 published children's' books in the United States,

- ninety-six were by African Americans
- thirty-nine were by and about Asian Pacific and Asian Americans
- thirty-nine were by and about American Indians
- forty-two were by and about Latinos

(Gangi, 2004, p.51).

All of our children are deserving of affirmation and visibility. They need to see themselves in the literature and realize the contribution their heritage brings. When mainstream children are the central focus of the majority of literature that children are exposed to, minority children are short-changed the experience to engage with the literature to visualize, infer, synthesize and interact through dialoguing to co-produce meaning as well as use prior knowledge to make connections.

The time is long over due that we provide the students with a more realistic education representative of all cultures. Today we can find some children's literature that is culturally relevant and authored by Aboriginal people rather than books that are authored by Non-Aboriginals who have appropriated Aboriginal themes and content.

There is a growing need in the education system that has developed in the interest of social justice appears more willing to recognize the rights of children to their own cultural identities. Susag (1998) believes that through the use of Aboriginal children's literature educators will facilitate Aboriginal children to establish their unique identities and help students to approach life with personal dignity. In addition, non- Aboriginal students will begin to take the social responsibility to respect and appreciate the culture of others.

The literature chosen originated from the legends of both Anishnabe and Cree people. The stories are set in modern contexts that include reflections of the past. The titles of the Aboriginal children's picture storybook selection are as follows: Ceremony in the Circle of Life (Whitedeer, 1983), Fox Song (Bruchac, 1993), Nanabosho Dances (McLellan, 1991), Jumping Mouse (Steptoe, 1972), Morning at the Lake (Waboose, 1998), The People Shall Continue (Ortiz, 1977) The rationale behind the selection of literature is to ensure the children are provided an opportunity for creative response with an Aboriginal cultural activity. The Aboriginal content of the literature creates awareness and introduces aspects of Anishnabe and Nehiyow culture. The selected Aboriginal children's picture storybooks exemplify how the culture and stories of today are rooted in the past that stem from a rich cultural base of different tribal groupings.

In order not to be misleading, in terms of Aboriginal authorship, I would acknowledge Steptoe (1972) as an African American author and re-teller of a Plains Cree oral story. The early seventies brought about efforts made by various minorities' to create literature that was more representative of a culturally diverse student body. According to a local Cree woman, who has participated in oral story as common practise

in her home community throughout her life remembers the many times she has listened to this story told and retold by different Cree Elders and storytellers (Larocque, 2003).

Susag's work "Roots and Branches" (1998), reveals the potential for Aboriginal literature to instil a sincere appreciation for the artistic expression as well as become aware of the complexity of the Aboriginal historical, cultural and personal experience. Her work is based on the philosophical premise of respect for this complexity, respect for Native voice acknowledging European cultural impact as well as to support each individual student's pursuit of his or her cultural ties to writers and storytellers (p. 7).

She quotes:

"Riding on the storyteller's breath, through image, word, and silence, is a vision – circling through the imagination and spirit of listeners to unite them all in 'the old ways,' a common experience of living value" (Susag, D, 1998, p. 10).

In selecting the literature, I considered the Aboriginal children's literature review produced by Slapin and Seale in "Through Indian Eyes" which relays a critique of the literature from an Aboriginal perspective. I also referred to Susag's (1998) "Roots and Branches: A Resource of Native American Literature", as well as Gangi's (2004) "Encountering Children's Literature: an Arts Approach."

The stories had to be of some interest to me personally and I needed to be able to make connections to my own experiences as an Anishnabe woman. The following are my selection of literature:

**Ceremony in the Circle of Life by White Deer of Autumn:**

The theme suggests an ever-increasing need to protect the environment through the lessons taught of the directions of the pipe and peoples relationship to the land, plants and animals.

**Morning at the Lake by Jan Waboose:**

A young boy spends time with his grandfather on a walk through nature to take in its beauty, morning, noon and night as he experiences a supernatural connection to the different animals they encounter.

**The Story of the Jumping Mouse by John Steptoe:**

A traditional Plains Cree legend where there are multiple themes and levels in this story about life lessons, which require reading many times at different stages in life to draw further meaning as a little mouse goes on his journey to find the promised land.

**Fox Song by John Bruchac and Paul Martin:**

This story is about a young girls' relationship to her grandmother who teaches her throughout the traditional ways. The grandmother prepares her granddaughter at the same time for their inevitable separation. A song is left her to help overcoming feelings of loss and the memories left behind.

**Nanabosho Dances by Joe McLellan:**

Storytelling is still a tradition among families today and the grandchildren beg of their grandfather to please tell the story and how the hoop dance came to be. They smudge and the story begins.

**The People Shall Continue by Simon J. Ortiz:**

Survival, humanity and acceptance are the main themes of this story. It gives an excellent overview of the history of Aboriginal peoples and moves from Creation to the

present day. It also portrays a number of Aboriginal heroes and presents a positive outlook for the future.

**Summary:**

Chapter Three has presented an overview of participant selection. There is a description of the literature related to the methodology presented through Aboriginal scholarship and perspective. The literature of the mainstream is then described to support the aesthetic approach to literature response. In addition to this is the ethics of the study, the research setting, the selection of books, and clarification of the methodology. How the data will be interpreted and presented is through a reframing methodology (Smith, 1999) and creating allows for the channelling of collective creativity in order to produce solutions to indigenous problems (p.158).

## **Chapter Four**

### **Introduction To The Classroom:**

The research took place in the Grade Three Classroom of a Community School situated on the 'West Side' of the city, in an area with a population primarily Aboriginal but, that is home, as well, to recent immigrants. This school was set in a "built" community anchored by a neighbourhood shopping centre (Wason-Ellam, Ward, Feye, Gilchrest, King, & Townsend 2004). From an Aboriginal perspective it is close to the edge of the western prairie grasslands and the spring hunting grounds of the Prairie Indians. The school reflects the community with a high Aboriginal population. At least one third of the grade three students were of Aboriginal ancestry. The classroom was neat and organized, decorated with student work and busy with print. Posters and charts encircled the room. A weather calendar hung in the meeting area. A sheet of large lined paper at the front was to record student-learning activities in language, science and social studies. The classroom seemed to be a typical primary class. Nothing, particularly, emphasized Aboriginal culture.

### **The Teacher:**

*"I am here for the children...to give them what I never had" (Ann).*

Ann is obviously of Aboriginal ancestry and refers to herself as Cree-Metis. Her manner and physical presence are recognizable to another person of Aboriginal ancestry like myself. Even though she was not raised in an Aboriginal home, Ann displayed the

characteristics of an Aboriginal mother figure or Auntie to her students. At the same time, she is an experienced professional teacher.

Ann's philosophy of teaching is drawn partly from her life experience.

Ann is soft-spoken, patient, and kind-hearted. When she speaks to students, she uses a gentle voice. She prides herself on being able to connect emotionally with her students. She states: "*I understand what my students are going through, because I've been there.*" Ann lived in four different foster homes before being adopted. From this early experience, she developed a deep compassion for children. Ann believes that a teacher must teach the child rather than the curriculum.

Like many Aboriginal teachers, Ann experiences feelings of alienation with her staff (Noel, 1994, p.79). Her life as lived is unique. She doesn't feel she can share her experiences with others who may not understand her cultural journey. She has observed what she terms as competitiveness in staff meetings. This kind of behaviour is contrary to her nature, so she becomes silenced. She is a hard worker and shares her ideas with a few friends on staff who she believes understand her. Ann attributes her discomfort with many of her colleagues to a definite lack of cultural awareness among the staff members. She suggests; "*the teachers need to have an awareness within themselves*" in order to achieve a better understanding of the students they teach. Ann ponders; "I wonder what it would be like to work in a school with all Native teachers?"

### **Classroom Environment:**

Ann creates what she refers to as a "classroom community" based on her belief that children need a sense of belonging.

*"I really think it's important for kids to feel belonging and a sense of value within a group. There are always kids that have more ability in this area or that, but everyone still has to feel belonging." (Ann)*

Respect is the foundation on which she builds the classroom community. Ann reminds students to respect each other's differences and to be accepting of each other. She believes that by building strong relationships with each individual student, the students will in turn; build positive relationships with each other. Building life-long relationships is really important in her classroom.

Over a three-month period, I made many observations of her teaching and interaction with the students in my weekly visits to her classroom. From my observations, Ann created an environment where students willingly participated in engaging and challenging activities. Ann offered a peaceful learning environment where respect is the common language. There was a sense of community as students are cooperative with each other and work collaboratively in her class.

#### **First Few Lessons:**

My first contact with the class was as a volunteer between October to December. During this time I got to know the students' names, their interests and their ability to read and write. The first time I entered the classroom, the teacher introduced me to the class. I spent my time observing the students and interacting with individuals when they needed help.

At Ann's request I told the students about my daughter, my family, where I am from, and what my interests are. I told them about Wikwemikong, the reserve I come from on Manitoulin Island. I showed them pictures and shared samples of the craftwork. I shared stories about my grandmothers. The students developed an understanding of the pride I have in my Odawa, Pottawattimi cultural heritage.



I believe these first few lessons that I had with the students, before I began to collect data, had an impact on the research process. The students became familiar with who I am and what is important to me as I became familiar with them. Our familiarity with each other allowed us to be more at ease, and less shy to share our natural response to the text. The following is my description of those first lessons with them.

In the first lesson I taught the class, I introduced an Aboriginal Children's story, Tomson Highway's, "**Caribou Song**" (2001). This book is written in Cree and English in that order. The story is about a young Cree boy, and his older brother who are on a hunting trip with their parents. While the parents sit by the campfire, the boys wonder off. A stampede of caribou enters the grounds and the brothers find safety on a boulder in the vicinity. The mother is in anguish thinking she has surely lost her sons in the massive stampede. But to her surprise and delight finds them content, comfortably perched on a boulder.

This story allowed me to introduce a "*Hunting Song*" to link to certain aspects of a hunting culture. This song is an Anishnabe deer calling song. Since several words in the song would be difficult for students who have never spoken Anishnabe to learn, I sang while students listened. I sang to them, as my 'Kohkwens' (Grandmother) sang it to me. The words are:

*Tee bee wen da*

*Bah no gwen*

*Eye ya bay*

*Eye ya bay*

The translation is: "*Where does he spring – the deer?*" The song of the hunter honours the deer for giving its life for the people.

Following this, I introduced the “Bone Game Song” to teach the students something about Aboriginal songs. The “Bone Game Song” is a “stick song”. A “stick song” uses sticks to make the rhythm. When the sticks are hit together they make a unique sound. On occasion, the sticks have a carved ribbing that produces an alternate sound. These are ancient musical instruments of my people the Anishnabe.

I hand-made the sticks used for the lesson, from choke cherry tree branches. I chose two branches similar in length and diameter and then, removed the bark. When I took the branches, in the traditional way, I gave tobacco as an offering to the spirit of the tree. I also said prayers for a blessing on my teaching and for the children that I would teach. From this I gained confidence that everything would go well.

This second song is a social song (as opposed to ceremonial songs which would only be used or sang in ceremonies). I learned this song from the Hearts of the Nations CD (1997). I believed that the students could learn this easy song and enjoy it. This is the first song I taught the students and they mastered it.

*Wey ya hey hey*

*Wey ya, wey ya*

*Hey hey ya (repeat)*

The song sounds complicated at first but I pointed out to the students that there are only four parts to it. Each part has a lead and then it repeats. They began by echoing what I sang until they became familiar with the whole song, just like in echo reading. I taught it in four parts. The students readily sang the echo. Eventually, they sang the entire song with me. Their introduction to Aboriginal culture was through this song. Later, I will refer back to the significance of this song, the impression it made on the students, and what the song “spoke” to me about their learning.

The second lesson was an introduction of my cultural heritage. This was the teacher's suggestion. I brought different artefacts from my home to share. I spoke about my First Nations culture and my people so that the students might see both the similarities and differences of Anishnabe to Cree, Sioux, Assiniboine or Dene. I introduced myself. I am of the Odawa, Pottawattimi, Ojibwa, the people of the Three Fires. The Three Fires is a confederacy of these three Nations, formed as an alliance to become stronger in number. These three nations speak the same language and originate from the same place, upper Michigan and upper Minnesota area. I brought a map of Manitoulin Island to show where I come from and shared it with the students. I briefly described our history, the history of the "sacred migrations". I shared the oral story of the Anishnabe history of how they migrated out West and how the Saulteaux and Anishnabe are the same people.

I shared the basket-work of my people, which is quite unique with the quillwork design. I brought in birch bark baskets with designs scraped on to them, boxes fashioned from porcupine quills, baskets made from cedar strips, and baskets sewn from sweetgrass. I taught the students how the baskets were made and what materials were gathered from the natural environment to make them.

I introduced a new song. I taught them an Anishnabe "Bear Song" which include words in the Anishnabe language. The song says, " Migwetch Mishomis, Manitou Muqua- Thank You, Bear Spirit."

*Migwetch mishomis,*

*Manitou muqua*

*A wey ha ya wey ya*

*A wey ha ya wey ya (repeat)*

*Yo hey ya, yo hey ya hey yo.*

I rehearsed the words muqua-bear, Manitou-spirit and migwetch -thank-you. We sang the song and then we had an art lesson as a response to the song. We made 'paper tear' bears and mounted them on a background sheet. The students enjoyed the lesson and proudly pointed out their bears on the bulletin board where the teacher had hung them.

For the third lesson, I introduced the book "Ojibway Dream" by Arthur Shilling (1986). The book shows large full-page colour photos of the beautiful artwork of Arthur Shilling. Shilling speaks in a poetic style when he talks about himself as an artist and the beauty of his people, the subjects of his artwork. The story speaks of his struggle with death in dreams and sleep and using colour to fight off its darkness. I chose this book because Shilling wrote it with such a passion. I wanted the students to be 'turned on' artistically by that same passion. Our response activity to this book was to paint.

The students were invited to choose the background colours first, and paint the background. Once this was finished and dry they worked in their chosen subject. I painted a winter scene with pinks and purples to demonstrate what they could do. I painted the background first and then, I demonstrated how I did a light wash coat. As soon as that was dry, I took a smaller brush and outlined my subjects. By this time the students felt they 'had the hang of it' and eagerly started their own painting. I stopped modelling and let them paint independently. I found that students loved painting. I therefore, let them paint two or more each. At the end of the lesson, their teacher displayed their work in the hallway. A number of the students pointed out the art display to me on my next visit.

These introductory lessons "set the stage" for the research in terms of student /teacher expectations. It built a relationship and familiarity. Students knew what to

expect from me. The First Nations students observed me, for long moments, as though they are trying to place me. They never came right out and asked if I were First Nations but they became very friendly and talkative, when I let them know that I was.

### **The Aboriginal Picture Storybook Selection:**

I chose six different children's literature selections to read to the class. Three goals predicated these choices: (1) to share certain aspects of the culture and provide response activities and cultural activities that the students could experience first-hand; (2) to help students understand and embrace Aboriginal values such as respect for the environment, and respect for one another; (3) to develop in students, a respect for other cultures through exposure and experience of Aboriginal Children's literature and response activities; and (4) to provide Aboriginal students with cultural content and literature that told their story and experience. Aesthetic experiences were offered to enhance the text and add a 'lived experience' to provide students with the opportunity to explore deeper levels of meaning from the text.

### **Introduction To Participants:**

The Grade Three class included students from the mainstream, minority or immigrant populations and Aboriginal populations of the prairies ie. Saulteaux, Sioux, Cree, Assiniboine and Dene. Pseudonyms ensure anonymity. The students of Ann's class were eager to learn, inquisitive, content and well mannered. They are very accepting of new people in their class. They enjoyed listening to stories and participating in creative response activities related to the text. All students were present for the story and response activity, as part of their regular language arts class. Only the students with consent to participate in the discussions were tape-recorded.

### **First Story: Ceremony in the Circle of Life (White Deer, 1983).**

This story is about a little boy who went home dejected after a trying day at school where he had been ridiculed by the teacher and his classmates. Going straight to his room, he stares out the window. He sees something before him – a vision of a grandfather entering his sight. A “Grandfather” not only comes to visit him but teaches him the way of the pipe and the gifts of the four directions. The story gives detailed aspects of the culture including a condensed version of the prayer for the pipe, the gifts of the four directions, and the Medicine Wheel. This story is central to a belief system, beautifully described in a way that the students could understand and appreciate it. I realized that there were concepts in the story that the mainstream and immigrant populations might not relate to initially.

The students gathered at the story corner, eager to hear a story. When they were settled and quiet, I began to read.

Many, many, many years ago, all things came to be.

The stars, rocks, plants, rivers, animals.

Mountains, sun, moon, birds, all things.

And the people were born ...

#### Notes:

May 15<sup>th</sup>/02

I introduced the students to “Ceremony in the Circle Of Life.” The story was quite long. I found the Aboriginal students and most others very engaged in what we were discovering throughout the book. Because I was introducing detailed aspects of another culture for which they would not be familiar with the

exception of possibly the Aboriginal children, I did not stop to make predictions, presuming they would not be successful at this. The students are predominantly Mainstream with a few from minority or immigrant cultures. Since our school systems perpetuate a hegemonic curriculum, the students would have very little exposure to other cultures.

From the corner of my eye, I noticed a group of boys who would not settle down. There was a small group of about five Non-Native kids playing amongst themselves. They could not sit still. I wondered if they were really paying attention. I reminded them to be respectful. They lasted only a few more seconds before they were back to playing with each other. I realized that there was nothing familiar about this story or, perhaps any of the stories, for these students. I have taught mainly Aboriginal children and they really loved these stories when I read them in class. They appreciated any story about Native culture. The mainstream students could not predict with this story – Ceremony in the Circle of Life - and also they would have difficulty following the story if they didn't listen attentively. Is it possible that the Non-native children (these few who'd rather play), were not able to relate, and therefore, could not or would not engage in the listening of the story because it had no relationship to anything in their life? Did they not have any experience that was familiar, that they could relate to the text? I could predict from this point forward that I might be up for a challenge in reading stories to the mainstream children from other than the dominant culture. Only time will tell and I will certainly be observant of this. For the most part students listened. At the end of the story we had a discussion.

I asked the students if there was something in the story that they had learned for the first time. Janet spoke up: “ *The*

*circle is yellow, black and red.*" She had observed three of the colours of the medicine wheel that represent the sacred colours of the four directions although she is missing one colour. James, who seemed to understand ceremony, replied: "*It's really an honour to get the peace pipe.*" This is certainly true and this statement did not come directly from the text. James inferred this idea from the story itself. Bobby learned: "*A pipe is made out of a stick and rock.*" One student observed the relationship Aboriginal people have to all beings in existence. Sherry states: "*The sun and the moon are our relatives to the mother.*" Although, Sherry hasn't quite grasped the concept an attempt at understanding is being made by her effort to vocalize her meaningful interpretation. I further explain that idea of relationship to the moon, stars, and mother earth. I shared what the elders have taught me about Aboriginal peoples' relationship to nature. I emphasized; "*We are never alone because we are related to everything in the universe. The moon, the sun, the sky and mother earth and all beings are understood to be our relatives.*"

Star Spirit traces a circle at Little Turtle's feet and divides the shape into four equal parts. He fills each part with a different color of earth.

Jenny exclaims: "*A bird's nest is the same because it's round.*" I take this time to reinforce the teaching from the text about how life is in a circle and everything in it exists within a circular pattern, design or motion. The bird's nest is circular. The seasons change in a circular pattern from summer to summer again. The winds move in a circular motion. The sun follows a pattern of circular motion in the sky. The cycle of life



moves from birth, to adolescence, to adulthood to Elder to death or birth again.

I asked what they thought was the main meaning or message of the book. They weren't sure as to what I meant by the main meaning of the book. One young girl, Jane, replied: "*Things about the Indian Nation.*" I suggested, "... *And there is something else. Something about the earth.*" The students had to think deeply about it. Someone finally suggested that we had to respect the environment. Unless they were familiar with Aboriginal culture and the complexity of the message, it would be hard for them to summarize this book holistically. The underlying message is respect for the environment and the author uses Aboriginal cultural values to exemplify the way to respect the earth. All of the students could give examples of ways to respect and protect the environment. Some of the responses were:

Lynn: Mother Nature.

Jett: Earth changes.

Joan: I was going to say we should respect the environment.

When the students were asked in what ways do they show respect for the environment they had a variety of answers.

Brad: Don't litter.

Mike: Don't light fires.

Chad: Don't burn plastic.

Eve: Don't smoke or don't play with matches.

Bob: Don't break branches.

Bill: Recycle paper.

Betty: Don't do drugs.

Susan: Recycle cans.

Sarah: Don't pollute.

Ben: Don't kill animals.

Immediately, it became obvious to me that the students had previously thought about recycling and respecting the environment. Ann, their teacher, who is environmentally aware, had more than likely completed a unit on recycling and protecting the environment.

I introduced the fact that Aboriginal people believe that animals have a spirit and a special gift. Some people possess this gift given to them by the spirit of the animal. For example, an eagle can see a little mouse running from miles away as it is flying in the sky. An eagle has excellent vision and can see things from a great distance. We sometimes say metaphorically that people have “eagle eyes” because they have great insight or they can see the future clearly. If you look with eagle eyes, you observe the world in a “good way.” You see detail and experience a heightened perception of other people’s feelings, which ultimately makes you a better person. We know certain animals have gifts and we try to be like that animal.

I asked the students to share with us their favourite animal. The students chimed off different animals such: monkey, bunny, lobster, tiger, snake, tarantula, horses, bugs, chimps, and lions. Half of their choices were not found in North America. They never mentioned animals that can be seen in a local prairie landscape such as the coyote, deer, elk, cougar, or Buffalo.

For the first time, one Aboriginal student-Annie spoke up. She told us that her family has horses and talked at length about them. This was one of those crucial moments for me, when I realized that I had reached a child. It proves to me that these books and maybe the fact that I’m Aboriginal too, bring the Native students into the discussion. She was also the only

student who interconnected her favourite animal to her actual life experience.

I observed that while I read the story the Asian girl, Lucy listened and smiled as we went along. I know there are many similarities in epistemological belief systems between Aboriginal people and Asian people. For example, we look at the person holistically. Perhaps she related to some of the meanings of the story relative to her own culture.

I feel the lesson went well and the students were engaged with the story and its multiple layers of meaning. Our stimulating discussion went longer than I had expected. The students did very well to stay on task for so long. In finishing our discussion of the story, I told the students what my father had taught me about teaching sticks. The sticks are just ordinary sticks approximately a foot in length, tied together at the centre. There are three of them, when spread apart, two form an X, with one stick fixed at the centre of this X, then inverted to run in the opposite direction. What is represented here is the concept of the circle of life. The X represents the four directions, and the movement of the 'all power' as all encompassing. The other stick represents the remaining three directions, above, below and the centre being the spirit or the person-inward. There are seven directions, rather than four. Seven is a more significant number to the Anishnabe teachings. We have Seven Grandfathers that represent seven values to live by that guide our lives. We also have what is called the 'Seven Hills' of life, which represent the cycle of human existence from conception to 'going home' or reconnection to the spirit world. When we consider the future we look toward the next seven generations. Respect for the environment is crucial to ensure the survival and well being of future generations. In my lifetime, I have been

fortunate to see six generations, in my family. These sticks could be shown in a circular format if a circle was attached to the tips of the sticks. The sticks are representative of the medicine wheel and its teachings. The students were respectful listeners. They appeared genuinely interested and I believe they learned significantly as they revealed their intertextual connections in discussions throughout.

### **Story Reading Two: Morning At The Lake (Waboose, 1997).**

This intergenerational story had significant appeal to me because it draws forth fond memories of my childhood and home. It is about a grandfather who takes his grandson for a walk in the wilderness. At each point in the day, the grandfather allows his grandson to experience something different.

It is so quiet that I am afraid to breathe, for I do not want to disturb this tranquil wilderness that encircles us. Then we hear it.

A low, mellow, haunting hoot echoing across the water...

In the morning, he notices the fog and haunting call of the loons. In the afternoon, he and his grandfather climb high on a cliff. They experience the sight of an Eagle flying very close. It drops a feather for the grandson. The grandfather explains what an honour this is. In the evening, they walk deep into the bush. They come upon a pack of wolves. The young boy is fearful yet he must be still and remain quiet until they pass. Since the author of this book-Waboose is Ojibwa, her description of landscape and wilderness is familiar to me. I have been to these places many times as a child. In this way, I selected this story to relate some of my childhood experiences of being at the cabin with my own grandparents. I introduced bannock, as cooking experience and aesthetic response activity. My great-grandmother sometimes referred to bannock as 'Lagalette'. The term

bannock is more commonly used in the west and since this is the term the students are familiar with, I will use bannock throughout.

**Notes:**

May 17<sup>th</sup>/02

I arrived at the school with a container full of pre-made bannock. The first three boys in from recess noticed it right away and asked if we were going to make bannock. I replied "Yes". They were excited by the prospect. These boys were mainstream children and I was surprised that they knew what bannock was. Ann must have introduced it to them before, I thought. As the other students trickled in, again and again, I answered the same question about what we would be doing that day. I knew from my teaching experience, the real selling feature of the lesson was the eating that would take place after the bannock was baked. The students responded with great excitement and I was relieved that they were excited by the prospect of cooking. Yum! Yum!

First, we baked the bannock so it would have time to cook. We moved to the kitchen. The students were so excited that their chatter grew so loud in the hallway. Ann reminded them to be quiet. She had two Teacher Associates to help us. After the students washed their hands they found seats at the tables. I instructed Lance to pass a little bit of flour to each student. They were to knead it a bit, shape it into a round flat piece, and poke it with a fork. As I watched, my thoughts went back in time to Nokum, whose withered hands kneaded so gracefully, as she prepared the bannock for the open fire. The students placed their bannock piece on the tray provided. All went well with much chatter and excitement. We had the

bannock in the oven in record time as we needed time left for our story and discussion. The air was filled with the smell of fresh, warm bannock baking and the memory brimmed with thoughts of my Nokum's kitchen.

Once the students were settled with their listening ears on, I began reading Waboose's *Morning At The Lake*. I introduced the section about the morning on the lake describing the call of the loon, Brett shot up his hand. "There is a loon on the dollar," he exclaimed excitedly. "A loon on the dollar?" I repeat inquisitively. Janet retorts: "Yes. It is on the Looney." I observed that the students were primed to quickly relate this text to their own experience. I continued with the story. "*We leave before the sun climbs to the centre of the sky.*" I asked the students, "What time is it when the sun climbs to the centre of the sky?" "At noon!" an excited Tommy replied. We continued reading with minimal interruption for predictions or inquiries. When the characters in the story climbed a rock cliff, Barbara remarked that she could see a face in the rocks. "There is a shape that looks like a face," she claims. Perhaps it was a vision uniquely incorporated into the rocks designed for the observant student to discover. The artist clearly leaves one to consider a face that blends into the rock.

At the end of the story I asked the students what they thought of this story. Barbara commented, "I found out about that rock," meaning the face hidden in it. Another student, Dylan, says: "How they used those words, Mishomis and Noshen." This student had remembered learning these words from an earlier time in the year and applied that prior knowledge here. These words were used in the story, Mishomis – meaning grandfather and Noshen - meaning grandchild. Our discussion was short due to the fact that the students did not

have a lot of experience to relate to this story. I wondered why? Did the experience not remind them of times in the woods or lake? Or is the student's understanding and learning of the wilderness transmitted by the Disney or Discovery channel alone? This worked well with the fact that we needed time to eat our bannock and class time was fast running out. Apart from their comments they did not really have a lot to say nor did they have any questions. With this story, and aesthetic activity of cooking, the lesson was cooperation, and drawing meaningful connections of my Nokum's experience. The picture storybook brought back meaningful memories for me. If the students could relate to these particular experiences, then hopefully they would share in their own experience with an older relative. Nokum's recipe for bannock is passed on from one generation to the next, just as I will pass it on to my daughter. I learned from my grandmother patience, perseverance and through observation the procedure to making bannock. Observing my Nokum's work, I was learning about the 'old ways'. These lessons about teaching have carried me through my professional career.

I introduced the students to the reasons why this story meant so much to me. It was about my people and described the area where I grew up. The morning on the lake is something that I have experienced in my childhood more than once when my siblings and I went fishing with my mother and father. I shared the experience of going camping with my family, my grandparents, my aunts, uncles and cousins. We went to a cabin on the bay at the far end of the reserve, now called King's Bay. We could only take the truck so far and then we had to haul everything by boat. We would cook all of our meals on an open fire. I loved the taste of porridge with that smoked flavour and bannock baked in a frying pan over a fire. We played all day in

the water and at night my grandmother would let us sip hot tea and eat bannock as we warmed by the fire.

These were fond memories of time spent with my grandparents. I asked the students if they had memories they to share about time spent with their own grandparents. The question elicited quite varied responses; each student seemed to have a unique experience.

Bobby: At my Auntie's cabin, my Grandma and Grandpa and me went boating and fishing.

Susan: We baked brownies together.

Jennifer: I went to McDonald's with my Grandma and Grandpa for lunch, and for supper we went to Pizza Hut.

An enthusiast interjects: "I might be going to my Grandma and Grandpa's."

Sharon: I slept over at my Grandma's and then in the morning my mom picked me up. With my Aunt Shelley and my Grandma we went to garage sales and I got some toys.

The discussion ended here. I believe their focus turned to the bannock that had arrived in the classroom. I invited the students to return to their seats to share the bannock. As time was running out, we quickly passed out the bannock to the students. They were excited to receive the hot fresh pieces of bannock. We offered them strawberry jam and most students were happy to have some spread across their piece. They ate their delicious treat contentedly. The students enjoyed the bannock. I observed the students came up after they had eaten their bannock to say thank-you. I thought this was really nice of them to show their appreciation by their own initiative and I noticed their very good manners. I hoped that this experience of cooking with me would not fade with time.



### **Story Reading Three: Fox Song (Bruchac & Martin, 1993).**

A granddaughter shares her experiences with her grandmother who taught her many things. It was difficult for me to share this story as I have lost my grandmother. Nokum used to teach me things in the old way such as medicines, craftwork, and belief systems. I found it hard to read this story because I have never quite recovered from the loss of my grandmother. At the end of the story, the young girl works up the courage to sing the song her grandmother taught her, without her grandmother with her to sing any longer. In some ways this story parallels my life because I often wonder what my grandmother would think if she was here to listen to me sing. I know she would be proud because she loved to sing.

I taught the students a traditional Cree Morning Song. This song has been around for hundreds of years and has been recorded by the Redbull Singers. Amongst the Cree people of Saskatchewan, it is a familiar song. I introduced the words and had the students repeat them. I sang it and asked the kids to join in at any time. I did not write the words out because this is not how songs are taught in the traditional way. I did not break it up or teach it bar by bar. I respected the teachings of the drum that I have learned from my Elder. The students were to begin singing when it became familiar as they listened intently. The details of the lesson follow.

#### **Notes:**

May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002

I entered the classroom and noticed that the students were still outside. I set up at the table. When the students entered the room, they were excited to see me. They asked if we would be cooking again. I let them know not this time and they didn't appear to be disappointed. Anticipating that my stories are accompanied by an aesthetic response, they further inquired about what we were going to do. I let them know that we were going to have a story and then we would sing with my drum. A wave of anticipation filled the room.

The students were curious about what would be next. Ann invited them to sit at the back. I told them I had a story for them and then I would teach them a song and tell them about my drum. They were very settled and relaxed and listened better than they have ever done. I appreciated their cooperation. Upon realizing that the story: "Fox Song," was about a little girl who loses her grandmother, they immediately shared their own stories.

Betty: My Grandma, my Great, Great Grandma, she died but she lived until she was one hundred and two. A few more students share their stories about losing their Grandmother.

Susan: My grandma passed when I was small.

Jade: My grandma died last year.

I ask if they would like to share more at the end of the story. I continue to feel pressured by the time constraints and we have a lot to cover. I introduced my drum and explained to the students how I came to have a drum and many songs. I introduce our new song by reciting the word and giving the English translation.

### *Cree Morning Song*

<i>Waniska</i>	<i>Wey ha la</i>
<i>Pe wapan oma</i>	<i>wey hi ya hey yo</i>
<i>Ahsay, piyesisak</i>	<i>wey ha hey ya hey la</i>
<i>Nikamowak</i>	<i>wey ha hey yo</i>
<i>Pe miyonakwan</i>	<i>wey ya hey ha</i>
<i>Kitaskinaw</i>	<i>wey he ya hey ya</i>
<i>Wey hi hi ho</i>	<i>Wey hi ya hi ya ho.</i>

The translation to English says:

*Wake up. The sun has come.*

*Already the birds sing.*

*Our land is beautiful.*

The Cree use this song as a welcoming song to greet the morning. One student is curious about my drumstick.

James: Is that made out of stick?

Anna-Leah: Yes. I made this out of a tree branch and leather.

Bobby: You carved it?

Anna-Leah: Yes. I carved some 'singers', some birds on it.

Jade: Can we see it?

I explained that the Humming bird and Eagle have a special meaning to me. I have had more than one occasion where I have been through life or career changes and both the Eagle and the Hummingbird appeared to me to make their presence known. My Nokum told me the Humming bird was a sign of good fortune. That is why I chose to carve those two particular birds onto my stick.

Mike: Can we pass that around so that we can see the birds?

I obliged the student's request and passed my drumstick to them. They looked at it and felt it. They marveled over it. I think the boys were surprised that I knew how to carve.

Bill: What's it made out of? Referring to the head of the drumstick

I repeat: "It is made from leather and it has some soft material under it."

I decided to leave the drumstick with them so that they could look at it later.

Jane: Ms. Cook had a rock and it had an eagle carved in it and somebody stole it.

Betsy: My Grandma died.

Cory: My Grandma died when I was in kindergarten and I only got to see her once.

Again the students made reference to the text. Many of them could relate to this theme, as it is a part of everyone's reality, even a young child's.

At this point I introduced the song. The students did their best to sing along. They certainly tried hard considering the song is in a foreign language with different sounds for them, that is with the exception of the Aboriginal students who may hear the Cree language spoken in their home. After I introduced the song, I spoke each sentence separately and had the students repeat it after me.

Anna-Leah: Waniska

Students: Waniska

Anna-Leah: Pe wapan oma

Students: Pe wapan oma

We continued like this until we had rehearsed each line. I encouraged the students to try it even though it is difficult for them. I told them that I would sing it through for four rounds.

The students sang their best and towards the fourth round they sounded a little stronger.

James: Why do you have two sticks?

The students were intrigued by the fact that I had two sticks.

The boy's focus was very much on the sticks.

Anna-Leah: Two sticks. This was the original stick. I

made my own stick because I wanted it to be special.

We managed to sing the Cree Morning Song, together. The words were difficult for them, which I knew in planning my lesson. I wanted to present them with a learning challenge. I did not write the words down to make it easy for them, as we would normally do in a 'Western traditional' classroom. The traditional Aboriginal way for learning songs is to hear them and learn through attentive listening, and then eventually join in the song. The students were listening, trying, and learning the song at the same time. I guess I could have explained this when I thought of it later. They distinguished what I was saying and repeated it orally but it was difficult for them to try these new words and sing the tune at the same time.

I caught the eye of one little girl who was new to the class. I believe she is an immigrant student perhaps from Kosovo. She and I connected when I first met her. I'm not sure if it's because I was sensitive to the fact that she was a new student and paid special attention to her or if she liked what I had to offer. We exchanged smiles when our eyes met. She made positive efforts to mouth out the words and do her best with that song. Of all the students, it should have been most difficult for her, because what we were doing would seem strange to her. Perhaps, because she had grappled with understanding the English language, she was more attuned to Cree because her auditory acuity might have been sharper than the others. She reminded me of me when I first moved to the city and was introduced to the French

language. She is a 'stranger to a foreign land' and I've certainly been there.

I had a really good time with the students so far. I told them I really have enjoyed this time and that they really have been great to work with. Jade commented, "The song you introduced was really hard". I agreed with her. They did quite well. I said we could practise the song each time I came if time permitted.

From the back row, Bobby requested, "Can we sing that song you taught us already?" I sang the first line and amazingly the entire student body chimed in full force. I realized that I had taught them this song and I was amazed that they sang it so well. Ann looked up from her work and smiled at how powerfully and enthusiastically the students performed what they knew. I told them they would know the new song just as well by practising it each time we gathered.

Ending on that positive note I left. I felt the need to have a follow up discussion circle on what they learned from the stories and activities. Also, it would help me to see this a little more clearly because our discussion time is a lot with the activity as the focus. I can only judge their learning by their enthusiasm.

#### **Four: Nanabosho Dances (Story ReaMcLellan, 1991).**

"Ni mishomis," I asked giving him some tobacco, "could you tell us about the hoop dance? I'd like to learn how to do that dance this year."

This story is about the origin of the hoop dance, set in a modern context with the grandchildren getting ready for a pow wow. Before the grandfather begins the story, he lights a smudge.

...surrounded by the beautiful smell of sweetgrass. "Long ago, isan" started ni mishomis...

It provides the cultural context that allows for the introduction of the hoop dance as the aesthetic response. It is my intention to teach them how to dance with five hoops. This story provides the historical context.

**Notes:**

May 24<sup>th</sup>/02

**The Hoop-Dancing Lesson:**

The story for today is “Nanabosho Dances”. I brought the dance hoops in while the students are still at recess. Lynn was excited to see me, and marveled over the prospect of hoop dancing. I put the hoops in the room. Mary and Bob arrive with their drum. They are my invited guests, my special friends and my adopted relatives in the ‘Indian way’ I have asked to come and drum for us, while I teach the students to dance. The students came in from recess. They are excited. Some ask what we are going to do. I tell them that we are going to hoop dance. As children are naturally curious, they ask who the people are that are with me. I introduced them as my traditional parents and my friends of twelve years. The students accepted this and asked no further questions.

I showed the students the red willow hoops that I had made. I explained to them that originally the hoops were made from red willow. This willow is supple and can be bent into round circles or hoops. The story “Nanabosho Dances”, tells the origin of the hoops and how the hoop dance came to be. I read the story. One of the students remarked that he recognized the circle of life from our other story. Another recognized the sacred colours. These intertextual (1996) links were amazing to me because I had not realized how much the students were absorbing.

I continued with the story to the end. I was a little self-conscious of reading this legend instead of telling it in the ‘Oral Tradition’. I wondered what Bob, as a traditional person, thought about this story

being written down. The students commented on the story. Then, they helped to carry the hoops to the gym.

At the gym there is much excitement. I had the students move back in the circle. The students followed me. I selected four to hand out the hoops. Once they all had hoops, we stood up and moved two giant steps back. We start to dance with one hoop, then two, then three. The students did very well until we got to five hoops. Half could figure it out but the over half got tangled up. It was hard for them to see what I am doing and apply that configuration to their own hoops. I gave instructions – thread through the bottom and flip it out, or place inside middle hoop and grasp both hoops under like this – they couldn't comprehend it. I physically performed it for them.

By the end of the class, the other students could manipulate the hoops really well, and were running or dancing around the gym as 'Eagles' – flying, gliding, swooping, and twirling. I thought it was great that they took the dancing beyond and personified the creature with their hoops and body language. Mary and Bob sang their song for half an hour straight. It was time to return to class. The students are elated.

As we gathered the hoops in the centre of the gym one little Dene boy, Jade grabs my hand and holds it for the rest of the class almost as though he was claiming me as his own. Perhaps he felt more familiar with me as we had both attended a Round Dance held at the Friendship Centre.

### **The Drum:**

At the end of the class, the students were very excited to have successfully learned to dance with five hoops. Their attention quickly turned to the drum as they lined up at the door. I gathered the hoops with a number of students. Jade got a hold of my hand and would not let go. Mary and Bob gave each student a chance to drum on the big



drum. The Elders offered the child, a stick and instructed him/her how to grasp it. The student would give the drum a few taps and then giggle out the door.

One Aboriginal student, Dylan, stood patiently waiting for his turn. Bob offered him a stick and watched as he grasped it. Knowing this was not the best hold, the Elder gently moved Dylan's hand on the stick and spoke in a quite whisper to him how to hold it properly. Dylan listened intently, somewhat surprised, by the special attention. I noticed how gently Bob spoke and how calmly he talked with this child. I know he saw something special in this particular child because he took time for him, to show him the proper way. I have seen this before. It is a special knowing that informs the Elder whom he will choose as singers. How gently the way of the Elder, with the students, I observed. I have seen this same patience and gentleness at their home, first, with their daughter and now, with their granddaughter. I am so honoured that my daughter and I were adopted as part of this traditional family. When I began teaching, about twelve years ago, these people took my daughter and me into their family and included us in all family functions that revolve around ceremony.

### **Conclusion:**

Ann returned to the classroom exclaiming the experience was 'awesome', using the student's words. Everyone was really happy and elated. I felt good too.

During the hoop dance session in the gym, there was a little boy who came in from somewhere, perhaps the grade one class? He grabbed a hoop and sat down in our circle. He wanted to participate. I had the students help me divide the hoops into five hoops each. They tried to direct this child as he was up playing with his hoop immediately. I told them to let him do what he wanted because I explained he was a 'free spirit' and happier if we just let him be. I

could tell he was 'special', a student that would literally dance to the beat of his own drum. It was good he came. I'm sure it was fun for him too.

The students were on a high from this exciting lesson. I felt it is the best one so far. They really participated and tried hard to master five hoops. The students also helped each other. When they realized there was just one of me and many questions for some, they happily instructed their classmates. Unfortunately we did not have time for a follow-up discussion. It would have to wait until my next visit to the classroom. The excitement and enthusiasm shown by the students revealed their appreciation of the lesson.

#### **Hoop- Dancing Discussion:**

The next time I joined the students for a lesson, I decided to record what they thought of the hoop-dancing experience. I felt it was worthwhile to record their thoughts and feelings.

Anna-Leah: Who remembers what we did together the last time I was here?

Jeff: We did a hoop-dance.

I reminded them of the story Nanabosho Dances and how it describes the origin of the hoop-dance.

Anna-Leah: How did it make you feel?

Mike: Happy.

Bobby: It was fun.

Anna-Leah: How did it make you feel on the inside to dance and have the drum there?

Jeff: Like an eagle!

Susan: It made me feel happy.

Jade: It made me feel like I was at a Pow Wow.

James: I didn't feel so embarrassed because sometimes I feel weird when I dance.

Anna-Leah: Neat! Maybe it's because you were all standing in a circle and everybody was learning the same thing at the same time.

Anna-Leah: Did you feel you learned something special from it? (Meaning the hoop-dance).

Dylan: I knew how to make a different kind of eagle but you taught me another one.

Jennifer: I showed my Grandma when I got home.

Anna-Leah: What about the drum? ...What did you think of it?

Bill: It's big and loud.

Anna-Leah: Who knows what the drum is made of?

Dylan: Buffalo skin.

Anna-Leah: Buffalo hide.

Jennifer: Leather.

Gabriel: Bamboo.

Anna-Leah: Bamboo! It is made out of cedar, a cedar strip that's bent by being soaked in water or steamed to form the rim. Or a hollowed out tree can be used as well.

#### **Story Reading Five: The Story Of Jumping Mouse (Steptoe, 1972).**

I chose The Story of Jumping Mouse because it is a Cree legend. I'm aware that this story is highly respected among the Cree. It is a beautiful story and I have learned that some of the Elders/story tellers can take up to half an hour or more to tell it. It is a teaching story. It is embedded with many lessons. This legend means more to me than any others that I have read or heard. I was quite certain that the students would enjoy it too.

By this time, the students were quite familiar with routine we had together. It was no surprise to them when I would gather them at the reading corner, read to them

and then do an activity with them. They were happy to hear another story. I told them this story would surprise them and indeed they were surprised. This story was a little hard to predict the unfolding plot. They listened intently.

**Notes:**

Jumping Mouse  
May 27<sup>th</sup>/02

The class was happy to see me. They were eager for the lesson and willing to listen. I had them recall the hoop-dancing day. We had a good discussion hoop dancing. I then introduced the story, Jumping Mouse.

This story is a Plains Cree legend, I explain to them. "I have been told that some Elders like to tell the story and share it still today. My friend says an Elder tells the story by playing the role of each character. Sometimes he even uses a buffalo robe to make the buffalo come alive. The students listened intently as I began to read.

...The young mouse peered into the deep water. "How will I ever get across?"...

Anna-Leah: How do you think he is going to get across?

Jennifer: Shrugs her shoulders.

Anna-Leah: "Jumping Mouse I will give you a new name." What do you think he is going to call him?

Bobby: Flying Mouse

Bill: Mouse

Gabriel: Kangaroo Mouse

Anna-Leah: "You are now called Eagle!"

James: He was a mouse now he's an Eagle.

Jade: He turned into an Eagle!

Anna-Leah: Did you think Magic frog was going to give him powers of flying...or turn him into an Eagle?

Jane: I thought he was going to give him his smell and sight back.

Mike: Can we draw a picture?

I invited the students to return to their desks to draw a picture of their favourite part in the story. Drawing, as an aesthetic response activity, allows for the students to portray their understanding of the story and reveal a part of the story that had special meaning for them. I noticed they did not have any questions while I was reading the story. They were also familiar with the routine of sitting down, listening to the story and perhaps having a short discussion. They assured me that they all had a favourite part to draw and they were eager to do this, rather than to discuss. We spent the remainder of the class drawing pictures of our favourite parts.

The students were a little apprehensive about drawing a mouse. A few of them asked if I would consider drawing a mouse for them. I do not like to draw for them because it their opportunity to learn away from them. I offered to draw a mouse on the chalkboard. The students watched as I drew them a great big mouse. They asked me to draw a frog and an eagle. I drew all of them to serve as models and to do the modelling of the drawing. The pictures were well done. Some of the pictures showed that the students had internalized and comprehended the whole story. Refer to examples in Appendix C.

### **Story Reading Six: The People Shall Continue (Ortiz, 1988).**

This story is of Aboriginal people and the devastation they encountered when White people encroach. It tells our history from our perspective, how we have survived the journey and how our people shall continue with shared responsibility to all people, to maintain the balance of the earth and restore humanity.

We must struggle to share our human lives with each other.

We must fight against those forces, which will take our

humanity from us.

**Notes:**

**The People Shall Continue**

May 29<sup>th</sup>/02

I read the story to the students. They listened well. I asked them what they had learned. At first, they had difficulty answering the question. Eventually they had things to say and share.

When they noticed that I had a CD, they asked if we were going to sing. They were enthusiastic about the prospect. Some students asked if we could sing the songs that I had already shared with them. I said I would introduce a new song and then we could sing the ones we knew. I was pleased that they wanted to sing the songs again.

The new song was difficult but they tried their best to sing along. They did well. I played the song "We are all one people" created by Joe Natowhow and sung with Cheryl L'hirondale. The song corresponds to the story "The People Shall Continue." The lyrics are as follows.

*We Are All One People*

*We are all one people  
We are all one nation  
Under one big sky  
You and I*

*We are all one people  
We are all one colour  
In her eyes*

*Wey ya, ya  
Ya eh yo  
Wey ya ya  
Wey he yo*

*We are all one people  
We are all from one creation  
We are all one nation  
Under one big sky  
You and I*

*We are all one people  
We are all one colour  
In her eyes*

*Wey ya ya  
Hey eh yo  
Wey ya ya  
Hey he yo*

*We are all one people  
We are all one nation  
We are all one colour  
If we try.*

Before I introduced the story to the students, I asked them to predict what they thought it would be about.

James: Native people.

Jenny: All sorts of people.

I read the story. The children listened. Midway through, the book has the picture of a group of Aboriginal people gathered around a drum, singing. A student remarked: "That drum is like you guys'."

I asked the question, "What are some ways we can appreciate others who are different from us?" This question elicited many different responses.

Jade: Being friends.

Bobby: Don't steal.

Mike: Don't make fun of different colours and don't say 'no you're not my friend'.

Dylan: Don't make fun of somebody if they have a problem.

Anna-Leah: What did you learn from the story?

Bill: Don't lose hope and don't be mad at anybody's culture.

James: It's not right to take their land where they were living and to take their kids some place else.

At this point in the discussion one student revealed his identity. A number of students claimed they were also Native who did not appear to be.

Mike: I'm part Native.

Bobby: Don't be racist.

Dylan: Don't be racist.

George: I am sort of Native.

Anna-Leah: Maybe you're Metis?

Steven: I'm half German and half Metis.

Jade: Don't judge somebody that has something in their ear to make them hear better.

I asked the students to reflect on all the stories we had read together and share what they learned about Aboriginal people.

Anna-Leah: "Can you tell me what you learned about Aboriginal people?"

Sue: Fires.

Mike: Different Bird.

Dylan: Hoop-Dancing too.

George: We made those bears.

James: Native people know lots about animals.

Jenny: They like to sing.

Dylan: No matter what people look like on the outside it's what's on the inside that counts.

Anna-Leah: Do you have something you would like to share that you learned from hoop-dancing, or learning Pow Wow music, or hearing the drum?

Jerry: Making those buns. (bannock)

Jade: When we did hoop-dancing?

### **Summary:**

I introduced six different children's literature books that focus solely on Aboriginal culture. Each of the shared stories, presented different aspects of the culture



including: the ceremony of the pipe; our relationship to the land; our relationship to the animals; our relationship to our grandmother; the origin of the hoop dance; and, finally, our relationship to the people of the four directions. For each story there was a response activity that provided an aesthetic experience for the students by discussion, art, music, cooking or dance.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Interpretations:**

My research addressed student response to Aboriginal picture storybooks through “menoh” (King, 2003) or aesthetic response activities. The literature served as the introduction to various “menoh” elements of the culture, extending the students learning by facilitating their actual experience of culture through “menoh” or aesthetic response activities. In analyzing the student response many favourable conclusions were drawn from the study. Using Smith’s (1999) decolonising methodology of reframing and creating the following are descriptive interpretations of which highlight the research.

I began with the introduction of six different Aboriginal children’s picture storybooks that centred on holistic philosophy and various elements of Anishnabe and Cree worldview. The stories presented different themes and aspects of the culture including: the ceremony of the pipe; our relationship to the land; our relationship to the animals; our relationship to our grandmother; the origin of the hoop dance; and, finally, our relationship to the people of the four directions. For each story a ‘menoh’ experience was provided through discussion, art, music, cooking or dance. For example Nanabosho Dances (McLellan, 1991) tells the story of the origin of the Hoop dance of the Anishnabe. The picture storybook leads you to the doorway of the lodge. The “menoh”

experience takes you through the doorway into the gathering circle and therefore inside the culture.

In the study, I found that the Aboriginal students all learned to overcome feelings of alienation (Noel, 1994) when the opportunity was provided for them to see themselves in the literature (Gangi, 2004), additionally, when hearing their traditional stories, students the experienced pride in their cultural heritage. In turn, the mainstream students, complacent in a narrower worldview, manifested through a hegemonic curriculum (Apple, 1979) participated in new experiences through “menoh” response (Green, 2001) activities. These traditional and contemporary stories expanded the experience of both Aboriginal and mainstream students, to make positive connections with others and develop caring relationships for themselves and their environment (Susag, M, p.14.) Aboriginal peoples are served better by the literature that emphasises the positive aspects of culture and cultural survival as opposed to the bleakness of cultural poverty (Gangi, 2004). Many Aboriginal people today are becoming part of the growing cultural milieu of dance and ceremony. The Seventh Fire prophecy of the Midewewin people predicted this cultural rejuvenation. The strength of Aboriginal people and their adaptability with regard to cultural survival and cultural preservation are the important focus for today’s student.

### **Coming Full Circle**

The concept ‘coming full circle’ was a recurring theme that appeared many times throughout the research. It metaphorically encapsulates the process of learning in Aboriginal culture and reflects Aboriginal Worldview. The circle is a powerful concept. It invites everyone to be on an equal platform and allows everyone to view each other. In

the traditional ceremonies of Aboriginal people, we gather in a circle. It is understood that no one in that circle is any better or any less than anyone else. Black Elk (1980) suggests that power moves in a circle. The circle reflects the cycle of time or the sun's rotation and the cyclical movement from season to season. The ceremonies, the round dances, the sweat, the feasts and the powwow follow the same pathway of the sun – a circular movement.

As the researcher, there were many times I felt that I had come full circle in my life. There were many times that I thought things through in a circular formation only to come back to where I had begun. Once I was more researched and experienced, I became self-assured to trust my instincts the second time around, landing where I had begun. In this study, the students came full circle in their learning. They experienced many response activities. The first song introduced became the last song that they requested that we sing. They sang with such fervour that their teacher even remarked what wonderful singers they had become. The students applied their learning and prior knowledge about ecology and recycling to their analyses of the shared stories which is another form of 'coming full circle' commonly referred to in academe as knowledge transference or intertextuality (Nodleman, 1990).

One student noticed that it was easier to learn to Hoop dance when taught in a circle formation. The student remarked how he would normally be quite shy or awkward in that situation. I have approached teaching with the students' desks always organized in a circle. My desk would also be within the circle to establish myself as part of it. I approached the Hoop Dance teaching in this circular way. I invited the students to form a large circle while I stood in the middle so that everyone could clearly witness both verbal

and demonstrative instructions. By standing in the centre, students had a clear view as I would rotate the display of hoops before them, explaining and then demonstrating each configuration.

The hoop dance symbolizes the circle of life and reflects the many living creatures in the great hoop of life. The configurations made with hoops represent the various animal beings. As the dancers' feet move from one foot to the next, they draw energy from the earth as it circles its way through the body. As the dancers breathe they breathe in the universal energy – the gift of life creating a circle through breathing in and out again. The dancers move in a circular fashion, turning circles within circles following a larger hoop- the path of the sun. They draw the energy from the earth and the energy from the sun as they move, one foot always connected to the earth, one hand thrust upwards towards the sun. The hoop dance becomes the dance of many 'hoops within hoops' (Black Elk, 1980), symbolic of the interrelatedness of all things.

The singers were invited to set their drum up to the side of the gym. They too, were seated around the drum in a circle. Voice creates a circular pattern as you draw in the 'breath of life' to the spirit place, creating song, exhaling to melody. The song encircles the spirit when the singer sings. The cycle of song becomes the vocal expression of spirit and voice where the singers' voice meets on a spiritual plane. The 'breath of life' is associated with song, dance, rhythm and motion as central to Aboriginal culture. It is a theme that threads its way through every outward expression of ceremonial tradition. It is also a conceptual metaphor that serves as the foundation for the spiritual viewpoint of Aboriginal people in spite of their great diversity (Highwater, 1981, p. 136). When they beat the drum, the sound reverberates in a circular pattern around the drum, from its

head to the base, around and out again. The traditional people believe there is a spiritual connection made as the drum touches the spirit.

The students were invited to drum to join the singers and experience drumming. As the students slowly filed out of class they took their turn at the drum. The Elder gently demonstrated how to hold the stick and used his other hand to demonstrate the beat. I noticed how gently he spoke and how affectionately he gave his time. From a teaching perspective, he exemplified a traditional teaching methodology inherent in the culture of Aboriginal peoples. In his family circle of life, this tradition will live on in their approach to teaching their children – gently, soft spoken, patient. As cultural knowledge is passed on from generation to generation, the circle of teaching and oral tradition is kept alive.

In presenting the teaching sticks, the students were told a story of how life moves in circles of interrelationship. My father taught me about the circle of life or what people know as the Medicine Wheel, as my great-grandfather taught him. The sticks showed the direction of the ‘all power’ moving in four ways but the circle itself need be imagined. To teach of circles that one cannot see, tells of a greater connectedness with the spiritual world. To envision, to dream and to imagine stems from the connection between mind and spirit. Aboriginal perception includes envisioning and it is understood that this is a natural ability of the people.

#### **Urbanization of Aboriginal Children:**

What was apparent was that urbanization was becoming an increasing factor in the lives of our youth. Although at least one third of the class was Aboriginal, I did not get the sense that they had spent any time on their reserve or outdoors. They did not really relate to the woodland animals in the text. It is worth noting the fact that the

students appear to be products of their environment and, therefore, they can only give to the text what can be drawn from that experience. Where one would assume that the students would make links to their Aboriginal knowledge, in this research, the effects of assimilation (Graveline, 1998) and cognitive imperialism (Battiste & Barman, 1995) were evident. A new generation of urban Aboriginal children is increasing in numbers. Their only link to the reserve community seems to be the connections to their grandparents. A curricular focus on Aboriginal language and culture is more pertinent than ever, when this new generation is that much further removed from the source of their culture.

I noted that the Aboriginal students were intrigued. They have a certain trust in their Aboriginal teachers through that familiarity of our Indianness. Even though they may not have had much rural experience, or exposure to the cultural traditions of their people, they sat respectfully spellbound, assured that their teacher would have something really interesting to share about themselves. Some of the Aboriginal students were given the opportunity to shine when for the first time they could relate their home experience to the text. I read the story **Jumping Mouse** (1972) and, in the discussion, asked what their favourite animal was and why. One student, who had never shared yet, relayed that her uncle had horses on the reserve. She had obviously spent time with him and the horses. She really lit up, in sharing her experiences, and I was glad that the question provided her with this opportunity.

### **Learning to Fly:**

In introducing the Hoop Dance to the students, I observed that they were enthusiastic learners and completely engaged. Everyone was eager to learn. I had invited the students to form a circle and I placed myself in the middle to give instruction. The

drum group was there to provide the music. There was a group of boys who caught on very quickly. I had them assist in teaching the others. Eventually, I was left with a couple of girls who needed me to review the hoop configurations over again. As I worked with them, the initial group of boys who had mastered the Hoops were off to the far end of the gym. As I observed them to see what they would do after having accomplished the day's teaching mission, I noticed that they were playing follow the leader – still dancing and keeping in rhythm with the drum beat. They were extending the activity through dance into a form of creative play. The leading student would climb over the bench as an Eagle gliding in gracefully. Then he would escort them off the bench to 'swoop 'round' and make a big circle. I had feared they would begin to 'horse around' having mastered the lesson. To my delight they were extending the lesson by adding the element of creative dance. It struck me that they had learned to fly on their own.

In teaching students, we nurture the students' skills from where they are, to bring them further ahead. I realized that this activity, in the students' dance provided the metaphor for teaching and learning with regard to the study, "When Eagles learn to fly."

The introduction of reading to young learners involves a complex understanding of each individual child. The teacher's efforts must be concentrated on becoming aware of each child's experience in order to match the reader to the literature. One of the main goals in creating an aesthetic literary response for the students was to have the students enjoy the literature and understand it on a more meaningful level. Incorporating a student's prior knowledge to the lesson is key. In some instances, the students' urban experience did not allow for them to relate to the text, situated, as it was, in the Northern setting. In my own experience, when studying literature, I felt we read the story and



understood it; but, the teacher would provide questions assuming we didn't understand. These comprehension activities were not interesting or stimulating for the learner in anyway. Having the opportunity to extend the text into an aesthetic response would have made the study of literature more enjoyable and more meaningful for me.

### **Making Connections:**

The students were able to make connections to the text based on their prior knowledge and experience. It is understood in the educational world that students do bring a wealth of experience and knowledge. It is our job as educators to tap into their knowledge and experience in the pedagogical choices we make for process and content in their learning environment. One example is in reading the story **Morning on the Lake** (1997). A student remarked, "There is a loon on the dollar!" His particular experience in life is solely urban and therefore his connection to the text was drawn from his experience with seeing the loon symbol on the dollar coin. Students make connections to text by making the text make sense in their world. It may not be the response we, as teachers, were hoping for but it is linking their life experience that is important.

In sharing the first story, **Ceremony in the Circle of Life** (1983), I felt the students were restless and possibly inattentive, but, when I came to another story with similar content, the students readily identified the similarities. They were able to relate the medicine wheel and the sacred colours. In this instance, the students exhibited the ability to apply prior knowledge or intertextuality (Nodleman, 1990). There are other examples but the importance of this, is that stories work to contextualize Aboriginal

culture. When they are followed by an aesthetic response activity, the cultural focus of the activity connects students to the text. The goal overall is to create deeper levels of meaning, in relation to the text, to facilitate a greater understanding for all children of Aboriginal culture.

There is evidence of what I would term “empty schema syndrome” which can be defined as the mainstream students being exposed to an alternate reality or cultural aspect that is completely unfamiliar to them. The non-native students had nothing to draw from or relate to when they learned about ceremony in the circle of life. The young boy in the story experiences a vision. This is the point where the students began to fidget. Perhaps it was only coincidence but I couldn’t help but observe when the story did not relate to the experience of the mainstream, there was a marked level of discomfort apparent by the students’ restless movements. When these students, probably for the first time in their lives, were exposed to another’s culture expressed through literature of another worldview, their schematic mapping was empty. They were at a loss to make the cognitive connections that they otherwise make daily and take for granted.

There were many instances where the students applied their prior knowledge to the text. When we read the first story **Ceremony in the Circle of Life** (1997), the students brought up terms such as reduce, reuse, and recycle. Obviously the teacher had covered this previously and the students were able to make the connection to the new text from their prior knowledge. In the literature, the story spoke of respect for ‘mother earth’. It relayed the gifts of the four directions and how traditional values of respect are needed to ensure the earth’s survival. The students were able to relate their prior knowledge in different terms and different setting but quintessentially, the same message or theme was

being relayed to them. They also took this same information from this first story and transferred the knowledge to the introduction of a medicine wheel and the sacred colours of another story. I was impressed that this first story made such an impact and that they thoughtfully had made personal connections. When the students were a bit squirmy, I couldn't help but feel that they were not relating and, therefore, were not engaged. The students were able to make some sort of connection, however small, throughout almost every story. It is only in the discussion of the story **Morning at the Lake** (1997) that I felt the students could not relate to the outdoor setting and the experiences of the animals in the book, which are abundant in Saskatchewan. Their experience appeared to be predominantly urban, with the exception of the student whose uncle had horses. It was not apparent that the Aboriginal students ever lived on a reserve.

Like the circle of stories that are told and retold to children many times in life, so too is their learning cycle. Each time they are told the story, there is a deeper, more meaningful connection made to the story than the time before as they connect to ones life experiences. Given repeated opportunity throughout their education, they begin to learn and understand on a deeper level as well as create the schematic mapping. They experience an acculturative process alongside their Aboriginal fellow students, as they become part of the cycle of learning reflective of the traditional teaching style of the ancient ones. The students are also developing positive attitudes in their becoming familiarized with Aboriginal cultural knowledge. Our circle of teaching and learning is a life long process returning to the starting point with the maturity of life experiences. The circle is the basic foundation of Aboriginal culture, worldview, ideology, philosophy and epistemology (Graveline, 2004, King, 2003, Ermine, 1995). It is the basis of all our

thinking learning and experience. It is reflected in every aspect of the culture. The medicine wheel, the prayer of the pipe, the stone circles of the Plains Cree, the Seven Grandfathers - Seven Directions of the Anishnabe, the language, the songs, the stories, the rituals, the artist's impressions all are a testament to the concept that power moves in a circular pattern and our perception, our intellectual tradition reflect this understanding.

In relating to the story **Morning at the Lake** (1997), half the students could identify a favourite woodland animal originating from North America. The other half of the students identified animals such as monkeys, lions, tarantula and tiger. It struck me that these animals could all potentially be Disney characters. Perhaps the student have seen these animals at a shopping mall tour or from the pet store but my feeling was they are characters from the latest Disney films. We like to think that Disney is not a cultural influence on children, but in reality Disney is a major contributor to a child's schema development. The industry tries to portray an unbiased playground of innocence and entertainment on screen for all children but Disney is definitely not without its cultural bias and stereotypes (Giroux, 1995, p. 2). There are many influences that factor into a child's life beyond the school walls but what is important is to be aware that this element of commercialization serves as a cultural influence of the dominant culture and can manifest in the students' in and out of school lives.

### **Circles of Relationship:**

There is also a circle of relationship. We are always related in some way to the people around us such as community circles, friendship circles and relationship circles of home. Ann, the teacher was exemplary at creating respectful relationships in her classroom community. It gives us a comfortable climate in which to share our cultural

knowledge with each other. It solidifies a connection and trust that may not readily be there otherwise. Anne's ultimate strength as a teacher was her ability to connect with each student and make them feel 'at home' in the classroom knowing what it's like not to fit in. Her goal is to reach the child and move them along from where they are. To accomplish this, she looks to the child and makes the curriculum fit where the students are, rather than trying to make them fit into the curriculum where they do not see themselves. I believe that Ann as a teacher and her gentle way with students had a lot to do with the success of my study in her classroom. She prepared the students to be welcoming and respectful having only given the students acceptance and kindness. She sets the model for the students to relate to their world and acknowledge others.

I would not have been able to introduce the cultural teachings that I had if it were not for my teachers and the Elders who freely gave to me. Some Elders believe that every Aboriginal teacher has the potential to reach the children on a deep and meaningful level. Aboriginal scholarship would attest to the opportunity for critical teaching (Graveline, p.8. 1998) through the educator's heart set to make changes in the status quo. Being an Aboriginal teacher provides an excellent vantage point to share and celebrate Aboriginal cultural heritage. Understanding this, they are willing to share cultural teachings that can be taught in a classroom setting. I like to acknowledge my colleagues when I introduce a lesson to the students. I also recognize that my ancestors stand before me. When I sing, they are with me giving me the strength and confidence to do so. It is not uncommon for people to sing and hear an extra voice that sings with them. I believe the ancestors are always present and guide us in our journey.

There was a definite recognition of familiarity between the Aboriginal students that I sensed throughout my visits. It was their characteristic behaviour that made me surer that I meant something to them. Perhaps through me, they could see an element of themselves or a familiarity to an auntie or relative. I can't be certain. They definitely took note upon my entering the classroom. They would watch me closely. Some would hover around and ask questions. Others would turn in their seats to face me at the back and just watch. They also showed me 'big eyes' when I was teaching which meant that they were engaged and attentive. Throughout the lessons they made contributions to discussion wherever they could. Familiarity appeared to work in our favour. The Aboriginal students had "not seen themselves" to this point in their limited experience of schooling.

Familiarity, definitely speaks to the students being attentive and engaged, as well as, willing to contribute, not to mention their anticipation of something good coming for them that they can relate to. We began a journey together from a place of understanding, a place of identity and a certain common "knowing."

### **Circles of Learning:**

Circles of learning occur when the students apply their prior knowledge to the text. When students can take what they have learned, internalize it and then articulate or communicate their learning through 'menoh', then one can be assured that learning has taken place.

Let me refer once again, to the profound moment in teaching wherein the students asked to sing the 'stick song' that I had taught them on the very first day and sang so powerfully on the last day together. This song would leave an imprint in their hearts and minds forever. In the future, there would not be that awkward fear of the

unknown when they will be exposed to Native song and dance for they will always have this song in their hearts and memories. It may even give them a bit of confidence when approaching a new learning situation. This ‘menoh’ experience served a pathway into a new culture for the students and was certainly a gift, knowing I had left an imprint.

When Eagles learn to fly, we succeed in our teaching goal. The students take the initiative to extend the learning experience beyond the required lesson and apply it to their own knowledge and experience base. “Menoh” is evidenced through the boys’ creative dance. The boys had become Eagles in more ways than one as learning was reframed, reaffirming effective practise from using different teaching paradigms.

### **Response to Literature:**

The response to literature was facilitated in a multi-sensory way, which ensured learning from a traditional perspective and breathes life back into the written word that has been captured and impaled upon a page. More and more research is demonstrating the educational merit of multi-sensory learning and the understanding of multiple intelligences (Graveline, 1998, Gangi, 2004). Aboriginal teachers are keenly aware traditional teaching techniques where students learn by observation and the modelling, namely the teacher. It only when they are provided the opportunity to test their skills, by doing can they prove to themselves they can do it. We do not give students enough credit for their ability ‘to do’ in academic institutions. Not everyone is comfortable teaching “menoh” response to their students but Aboriginal resource people can be invited into the classroom. Teachers do not need talent in the aesthetic realm, although it is a definite benefit to teaching, but, at least, they need to provide more opportunity to allow for “menoh” style learning. In the words of Dr. Buffy St. Marie:

“Learning naturally comes from within. Those gifts of creativity are naturally there already.”(in presentation, 2003)

The students live in a complex multi-cultural world, but the school system does not outwardly reflect this. Change towards embracing and acknowledging its multi-cultural clientele is slow, working within a predominantly hegemonic curriculum. One dominant culture is no longer appropriate when we need to value and affirm the cultural identity and experience of all students. Cultural background, learning style, perception and learning experience all need to be considered when teaching students today. As an Aboriginal teacher my concern for the success of Aboriginal students has grown from my experience as a teacher. With more Aboriginal students becoming teachers, there is a growing opportunity to make a difference for our children. Reframing is to make choices that are empowering rather than perpetually being the “other.” Reframing eliminates obstacles by expanding the educational constructs to holism and allowing for the introduction of cultural teaching that respects traditional teaching practise.

Taking from my experience of being taught traditional craftwork with my grandmother and transferring this to the classroom, I found through my research that the introduction of Aboriginal picture storybooks and “menoh” response as a successful teaching approach that effectively includes the mainstream population. I realized there was a two-fold benefit to introducing Aboriginal literature and “menoh” response in a mainstream classroom. The greatest advantage of which is that Aboriginal students’ needs are met in terms of identity, self-esteem, and cultural affirmation. Secondly, the mainstream students are given the same opportunity to experience Anishnabe and Cree culture through “menoh” response and learn of alternate worldview in a respectful, enjoyable, and non-threatening way. In the dialoguing that follows each piece of



literature, the students learn from each other by sharing related experiences and making connections to the literature. The Aboriginal students have an opportunity to shine and the mainstream students experience an acculturative process for a deeper understanding of certain aspects of the culture as an extension from the literature.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Students learn better given opportunity to experience their learning through “menoh.” The students internalize their learning on a deeper level when their senses are stimulated through their experience of learning. Learning by observing and then by doing is a traditional way of teaching and when incorporated with the teaching approach proved successful.

Being an Aboriginal teacher for Aboriginal and mainstream children is important. On one hand the Aboriginal students recognize there is something familiar with an Aboriginal teacher perhaps resemblance to a family member. This familiarity seemed to prompt student motivation and bring out the students enthusiasm to learn and to share their connections to the literature and culture. Aboriginal and mainstream students need to see the model of Aboriginal people in the professional field as natural.

Through sharing circles, the students make intertextual (Nodleman, 1990) links to literature. The students voiced their connection to familiar aspects of their own life in relation to the Aboriginal storybook being shared. The students were able to make meaningful connections to their lives. The Aboriginal students were able to overcome feelings of alienation, which became apparent when a number of students revealed their

ethnicity. Some of the students spoke where they had never really been part of the discussion before. Aboriginal picture storybooks and “menoh” activities therefore bring students into the discussion. When Aboriginal students see themselves in literature, the Aboriginal literature still serves to instil pride in their cultural heritage even when they are being introduced to aspects of the culture that they are unfamiliar. The mainstream students become acculturated (Hualn & Warley, 1999) in Aboriginal culture at the same time.

Using a circular format for teaching allowed every student to see clearly the art lesson being modelled, the bannock being kneaded, the voice being shared, the drum keepers beat, or the dance step being introduced. Students benefited from the visual cues provided and the circle put everyone on equal grounding. Each could see that everyone struggled with the hoop manipulation not just himself or herself as the hoops were cumbersome and the technique for turning them came with experience and building strength. The students were less self-conscious when joined together in a circle to figure something out. The boys in particular felt successful enough that they began to interpret the dance left to their own creativity.

A profound moment in my research was to discover the first song I introduced was requested for a ‘sing’. The students sang with enjoyment, enthusiasm, vibrato and power. I never would have guessed introducing a simple song would leave such a lasting impression. They remembered the song and in turn, had become singers. The students had come full circle in their learning. I imagined them as adults, having learned this song; they would have an understanding of the culture that goes beyond intellectual knowledge

to a heart felt understanding. Perhaps, internalizing “menoh”, through one small part of the culture, will leave a lasting impression.

**Implications:**

The representation of Aboriginal stories, characters and experience is crucial to the formulation of Aboriginal students’ identity and positive self-esteem. We need to strongly emphasize the importance of literacy and early literacy learning to the parents and educational community. Aboriginal children are rooted in an Oral Tradition and need to make a positive transition to the world of literature and new media for learning.

Reading is as important as ever and as educators, we need to help the communities become aware of that importance and through that awareness acquire a vested interest in our children’s learning. I see it as my responsibility as an Aboriginal educator to instil the love of reading to my students. Reading is the ultimate key to their success. Parents, too, need to know this. Not only does the introduction of Aboriginal culture serve to heighten Aboriginal students’ self-esteem and strengthen their sense of identity, Aboriginal literature can serve a dual purpose when introduced to the mainstream as method for acculturation (Hulan & Warley, 1999).

There needs to be a curricular revitalization that is inclusive of all cultures and that recognizes the multi-cultural fabric of this country. We need to see hegemony as a thing of the past as we journey through the post-modern era. Curriculum reconstruction and design has to be more cognizant of what exists in reality as multi-cultural. The curriculum design must include the writers from the multi-cultural fabric of the school community. It is the input from Aboriginal people and minority cultures that will prompt the greatest changes to see that their culture is represented authentically. Students need to

be introduced to Aboriginal literature and culture throughout their school years. In incremental stages, the students could be introduced to oral stories, Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal picture storybooks and eventually Aboriginal literature written by Aboriginal people who would accurately present the Aboriginal cultural and contemporary perspective.

With reference to the oral stories such as **Jumping Mouse** (1972) that are told and retold throughout a person's life, certain words or meaning may speak more loudly to people at different stages of their life experience. Creating positive attitudes is taught over time. As a person matures their life experiences become enriched. There becomes more meanings to draw from and relate to. Wisdom is expected of the old, but children are learners until they come to the grandmother stage. Even here, for some people, it is the time in life where they can right the wrongs or make positive changes in relationships. A child is never expected to know of wisdom until they have heard the stories many times learned and re-learned from them and maybe when their hair has become white, they will know a little bit.

Recognizing all life is a circular movement of which we are a part and embracing holism with regard to educating students needs to be instilled in the educational institutions. Linear organization and categorization may be what always has been there for the dominant or mainstream society, but this does not mean that perception, in an alternate form, is not equally valid. A fragmentary worldview formulates an educational institution that organizes itself in categories and labels. This is interpreted by Aboriginal people as methods of control and domination. Once a student is labelled by the measure of European standard and expectation, the Aboriginal and minority populations fall into a

lesser category and are labelled as perpetually needing to 'catch up' or 'measure up'. Their education becomes sub-standard as they are placed on lower tracks subject to rote drill, memorization, worksheets and lower level comprehension (Gay cited in Gangi, 2004, p.157). The European paradigm prides itself on individualistic, self-motivation for individual achievement. Aboriginal peoples still honour the traditional teachings wherein individual achievement is given back to the community as an adult in the professional field because it was your community that supported you.

The Oral Tradition has preserved our history in the telling and retelling. The opportunity to share our version of history has not been made available through hegemonic practise. Our stories and our songs are still here. This is just one way to reach our children and instil pride and positive self-esteem. Our music naturally mimics the rhythm of the language (Charpentier, 2004). Students are better served learning in the rhythm and sound of their mother tongue. Perhaps, when music can be applied as method to early literacy learning, we need to start with the child's first language and introduce those first lullabies and children's songs in their own language.

One cultural window is too narrow a view for our educational institutions when our country prides itself on the multi-cultural mosaic that exists here today. Aboriginal children's picture storybooks and 'menoh' response is a stepping stone to learning and experiencing another cultural reality. The mainstream is welcome. It is their job to be willing to step through the doorway and experience with us. Aboriginal people's strength is vision. Without our own resources and capacity for vision we would not have survived the harsh and brutal reality of colonization and the residential schooling system. It takes more than just plain sight to really see – it requires vision (Highwater, 1981, p.xiv,

Cajete, 1994). We are still here; our languages are still with us and the culture was not completely lost. Envisioning a brighter future in education and dream new visions (Smith, 1999) for Aboriginal students remains the tremendous task of Aboriginal educators. It is through our efforts to reframe (Smith, 1999) education for our children and instil creativity (Smith, 1999) as common practise that the students will succeed.

In the prophecies of the Anishnabe people, it is said: “The children of the Seventh Fire will rise up strong and beautiful once again”. They will work hard to preserve the language, almost dying. They will be instrumental in a cultural resurgence for their people. They will approach the Old Ones who have fallen asleep because no one has sought their teachings for a long, long time. They will return to the trail of the Sacred Migrations and find the bundles – the ancient scrolls of our people that were left along the way and return them to the lodges. The sacred fire of the Midewewin will be re-ignited, and the four doorways of the four directions will be re-erected. Our people will gather once again for the teachings in our traditional way. Our Traditional culture will experience resurgence and the people will be strong again. The time is now to honour the Aboriginal people’s culture and traditions because they have always honoured those that stand outside our circle. Inclusiveness is the foundational principal of Aboriginal Epistemology and worldview. Our history speaks to this inclusion. We gave freely our knowledge, our agricultural techniques, our produce, our medicines and our skills for survival, to a people who arrived here sickly and impoverished. We did not reap the commercial benefits experienced by those who appropriated our Traditional knowledge but we ask today to at least recognize our contributions to the global food market, Pharmaceutical Trade, arts and music. And at the very least, see our Aboriginal children

as having something very valuable to offer – future humanitarians, visionaries, medicine people, and scientists. We encourage you to teach in a circle, to acknowledge Aboriginal students natural ability to go inward and draw vision from the spirit place, to understand and appreciate our knowing of the interrelatedness of all things in life. Given the opportunity to have voice perhaps our youth will impart their wisdom and shed their light upon the world to make it a better place for all of us.

The drum speaks to us. Listen carefully to the song.

***Bi gi wen, Bi ge wen***

***Wey hi ya hi ya ho...***

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## Appendix A

## APPENDIX A: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR TEACHER

I appreciate your participation in the research study: Children's Responses to Aboriginal Literature. The study will illuminate ways that children respond to stories that are expressly written about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal ways and will be incorporated into your regular language arts program. I will adhere to the following guidelines which are designed to protect the interests of everyone taking part in the study.

1. After consulting with you about the books I have selected to share and the response activities I plan to do following the reading of the Aboriginal picture storybooks, I will work with you to develop a working schedule that fits the timelines of the class.
2. In a series of six lessons over a six week time interval I will read a story to all children and then ask the children to respond to the stories through a variety of in-depth meaning-making activities such as song, art, drumming, music and dance (approximately one hour per lesson and activity). Following the activity, I will divide the class into two sharing circles. Those children who agree to participate in the study will join me to discuss how they made meaning of the selected story which will be audiotaped. The other group will work with you and will discuss the story but will not be audiotaped. There will be no risks as the activities are part of the regular language arts curriculum.
3. After each class, the audiotape will be transcribed and analysed to discover the major themes and emerging patterns. The children will be asked to read the transcript or have the transcripts read to them to clarify and add information in their own words so as to construct the meanings that become "data" for later interpretation by the researcher. In discussing the data with the researcher, the children may delete anything they do not wish to be quoted in the study. Later the researcher will discuss the summary and each family will receive a summary of the study.
4. The tape recordings made during the study will be kept in a secure place and will be held at the University of Saskatchewan for five years according to the University of Saskatchewan guidelines with my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies.
5. Participation in the study is voluntary, and a child may withdraw at any time or you the teacher may also withdraw without penalty. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will not be used.
6. The results of the study will be disseminated in a thesis as well at scholarly conferences and in journal articles. To assure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for your name, the students, and the name and location of the school.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand the guidelines above  
(Please sign your name)

and agree to participate in the study and adhere to the guidelines. I have received a copy of the consent form for my records. The proposed research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on -----.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\* If at any time you have any questions about this study, you can contact us, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, 966-7578, Department of Curriculum Studies, (home 653-5844), Anna-Leah King, (373-7236) Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum Studies, or the Office of Research Services, University of Saskatchewan at 966-4053.

## Appendix B

## APPENDIX B: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR PARENTS OR EXTENDED FAMILY

I am Anna-Leah King, an Anishnabe woman and a graduate student at the University of Saskatchewan who is conducting a study with your child's teacher: Children's Responses to Aboriginal Literature. The study will look at how children respond to stories that are expressly written about traditional and contemporary Aboriginal ways which will be incorporated into the classroom language arts program. I will adhere to the following guidelines which are designed to protect the interests of everyone taking part in the study.

1. In a series of six lessons over a six week time interval I will read a story to all children in the classroom and then ask them to respond to the stories through a variety of in-depth meaning-making activities such as song, art, music and dance (approximately one hour per lesson and activity). Following the activity, I will divide the class into two sharing circles. Those children who agree to participate in the study will join me to discuss how they made meaning of the selected story which will be audiotaped. The other group will work with the teacher and will discuss the story but will not be audiotaped. There will be no risks as the activities are part of the regular language arts curriculum.

2. After each class, the audiotape will be transcribed and analysed to discover the major themes. The children will be asked to read the transcript or have the transcripts read to them to clarify and add information in their own words so as to construct the meanings that become "data" for the researcher. In discussing the data with the researcher, the children may delete anything they do not wish to be quoted in the study. Later the researcher will discuss the summary and each child will receive a summary of the study.

3. The tape recordings made during the study will be kept in a secure place and will be held at the University of Saskatchewan for five years according to the University of Saskatchewan guidelines with my supervisor, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, Department of Curriculum Studies.

4. Participation in the study is voluntary, and a child may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of grades. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will not be used.

5. The results of the study will be disseminated in a thesis as well at scholarly conferences and in journal articles. To assure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used for the students, and the name and location of the school.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand the guidelines above

(Please sign your name)

and agree to participate in the study and adhere to the guidelines. I have received a copy of the consent form for my records. The proposed research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on -----.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Researcher's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have any questions about this study, you can contact us Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, 966-7578, Department of Curriculum Studies, (home 653-5844), Anna-Leah King, (373-7236) Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum Studies, or the Office of Research Services, University of Saskatchewan at 966-4053.

## Appendix C



## APPENDIX C: LETTER OF CONSENT FOR CHILD

Dear Student:

I want to introduce myself to you. My name is Anna-Leah King and I am Anishnabe. I study at the University of Saskatchewan. I am conducting a special study on how children enjoy reading stories about Aboriginal peoples. I will be in your class reading to you and doing some singing, drumming, art, and music with your teacher. I would like to ask your permission to participate in the study.

Sometimes I will want to tape record some of our discussions so we can remember our ideas. I may even ask you if we can make a photocopy of some of your writing or art so we can see how you are learning.

When I finish the study, I will write about it so that others will understand the wonderful work you are doing. I will not use your real name in the study and you can help me make up a name for you. Neither will I use the name of your school. When the study is finished, the audiotapes and copies of your work will be safely stored at the University of Saskatchewan for five years before it is erased. Participation in the study is your choice. If you choose, you can withdraw from the study at any time without any loss of grades or penalty.

If you are willing to participate in the study, would you please sign your name and date the attached form. A copy of this form will be provided for your records.

Child's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I will participate in the research study and allow my discussion about my reading to be audio-taped and written or art responses to photocopied.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand I can choose to withdraw from the study at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

\*If at any time you have any questions about this study, you can contact us Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, 966-7578, Department of Curriculum Studies, (home 653-5844), Anna-Leah King, (373-7236) Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum Studies, or the Office of Research Services, University of Saskatchewan at 966-4053.

The proposed research project was reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Ethics in Behavioural Science Research on -----.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D

## APPENDIX D:LETTER OF CONSENT FOR RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I appreciate your participation in the research study: Children's Responses to Aboriginal Literature. I am returning the transcripts of your audio-taped interviews for your to read and then sign the release of confidential information. I adhere to the following guidelines which are designed to protect the your confidentiality and interests in the study.

1. Would you please read and recheck the transcripts for accuracy of information. You may add or clarify the transcripts to say what you intended to mean or include additional comments that will be your words. You may also delete any information that you may not want to be quoted in the study.
2. The interpretations from this study will be used in a research report and scholarly journal articles or other similar publications and presentations. Your name will not be used in the final report or in any scholarly articles or presentations.
3. In accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Guidelines on Behavioural Ethics, the tape recordings and transcriptions made during the study will be kept in a locked file until the study is finished with my teacher, Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam. After completion of the study, the tapes will be kept for five years at the University of Saskatchewan and then destroyed.
5. Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of grades. If this happens, the tape recordings and interview data will not be used.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand the guidelines above.

(Please sign your name)

and agree to release the revised transcripts to the researcher. A copy of this form will be provided for your records.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

If at any time you have any questions about this study, you can contact us Dr. Linda Wason-Ellam, 966-7578, Department of Curriculum Studies, (home 653-5844), Anna- Leah King, (373-7236) Graduate Student, Department of Curriculum Studies, or the Office of Research Services, University of Saskatchewan at 966-4053.